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THE CRESSET

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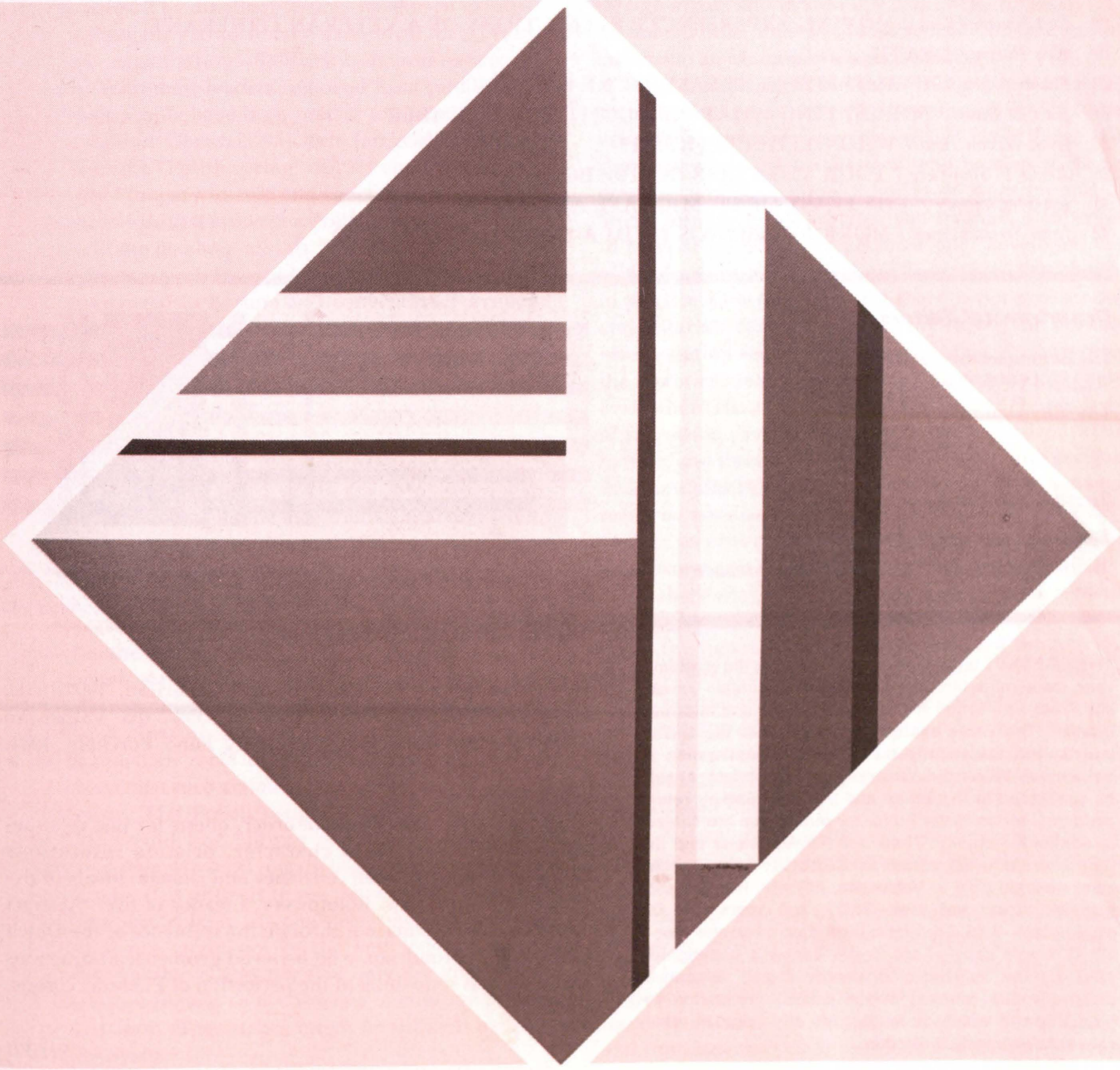

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Contributors

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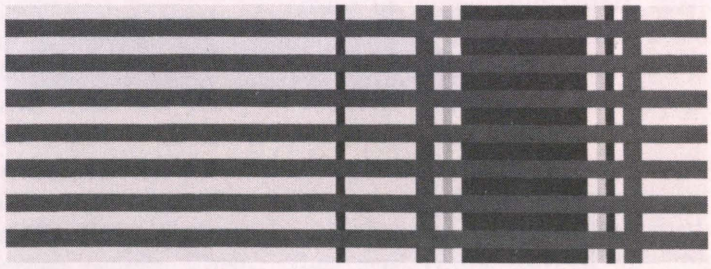

above: Lawrence Lange (American, c.a. 1920-1960), *Colorhythm,* 1954, oil on canvas, 15" x 40". Valparaiso University Art Collection. Gift of Robert Kostka, 1981.

cover: Ilya Bolotowsky (Russian-born American, 1907-1981), *Scarlet Diamond,* 1981, acrylic on canvas, 35½ " dia. Valparaiso University Art Collection. University Fund Purchase, 1981.

cover comments

These paintings are images of order, quests for just relationships, condensations of character, pristine resolutions of formal battles between constancy and change, ideals of dynamic wholeness. Ilya Bolotowsky, a leader of this "Abstract Classicist" style, came to it through the influence of the Dutch painter, Piet Mondrian, who believed geometric abstractions could express something of the perfection of Platonic, cosmic, order.

RHWB

IN LUCE TUA

Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

Poland and World Politics

It has happened again: an attempt to establish socialism with a human face in Communist Eastern Europe has been crushed.

It appears as of this writing early in the new year that the Polish government's declaration of martial law has succeeded in silencing active opposition and imposing public order. The dissident leaders have been arrested. Lech Walesa, the extraordinary spokesman for an extraordinary organization—Solidarity—is somewhere in custody. With their leaders removed from public sight, the Polish people have been unable to mount effective protest against General Wojciech Jaruzelski's military rule. Thus the "Polish spring" of 1981 endures the same fate as did Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

There is little that either the Polish people or the outside world can do about all this. Military intervention is out of the question. It would bring a general war, one that if restricted to Europe and conventional weapons the West could not win and if extended to the world and nuclear arms would result in mass devastation. Violent internal resistance would almost certainly be heroic folly. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland, which has made clear its unhappiness with martial law, has indicated its understanding of power relations within the country by urging workers not to resort to armed resistance. The church understands that such action would only bring bloody repression and, if necessary, a Soviet invasion and occupation. Even President Reagan, who has every political reason to encourage protest, has made it clear that he does not expect or want the Poles to take to the barricades.

Economic sanctions express our outrage and so have symbolic meaning, but no one expects them to have any significant effect on internal developments in Poland. And if sanctions *could* destroy the Polish economy, it is not clear that such actions would make moral or strategic sense. The Polish people would suffer terribly, the West would lose billions of dollars on defaulted loans, and Poland would remain under ultimate Russian domination. It is difficult to see that a Polish economic wasteland would be in anyone's interest. Internal passive resistance might not be the best form of protest available, but that is a matter that only the Poles themselves can see to, and in the absence of effective leadership, any form of resistance might be difficult to institute effectively.

The West's options, then, are severely restricted in Poland. We can—we have to—express our moral revulsion at the suppression of tentative moves in Poland towards establishment of the ordinary freedoms we in the West assume as a matter of course, but we can do little in a positive sense to get those freedoms restored. At the very least, however, we can use the Polish tragedy as an occasion to sharpen and deepen our thinking on foreign affairs and to rid ourselves of the illusions and sentimentalities that so often reduce foreign policy analysis to an exercise in wishful thinking.

In the first place, all but the willfully blind must see that the problem of tyranny and oppression under Communism stems from the system itself, not from the character of the particular men who happen to be in power at any given time. Scholars of Marxism and of Soviet history debate whether the tyranny is inherent in Marxist ideology or whether it only developed out of the Leninist or Stalinist applications of that theory to practice. Given the fact that there is not now a non-authoritarian Marxist regime anywhere, the former interpretation seems the more plausible. In any case, the historical record is clear: all Communist regimes everywhere have been and are tyrannies. The severity of repression varies from place to place and from time to time, and those variations must be taken into account in formulation of policy towards Communist governments by non-Communist nations. Stalin was a butcher, and his successors have not been, or at least not to the same extent or in the same way.

But there are none of them in any way close to being democrats either, and they are made to act the way they do by the requirements of the system, not by their individual preferences. All Communist regimes rest on the dictatorial power of the Communist party, and that party dictatorship cannot coexist with freedom. The Polish government cracked down on Solidarity, *as the logic of the system required it to do,* when Solidarity began to challenge the exclusive monopoly of power by the party. A Communist regime that moves toward freedom will only arrive at its destination by becoming no longer Communist.

In Eastern Europe, of course, the source of tyranny cannot be defined simply by reference to the abstract needs of the ideological system. With the exception of Yugoslavia, Eastern European regimes exist at the mercy and under the domination of the Soviet Union, and the leaders of those regimes understand full well

We must disabuse ourselves of the fantasy of "convergence," the belief that Communist and Western states are fated over the long run to wind up with social systems that are essentially similar.

that their freedom of action extends only as far as the Kremlin allows it to. Again, control from Moscow is often less repressive and more flexible in its application than was the case in the days of Stalin, but the people of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have particular reason to know that Soviet control is no less absolute for its being exercised with some measure of latitude. (We trust that no one seriously believes that the crackdown in Poland was made without primary reference to the wishes of the Soviet Union; those who do so believe will, as the saying goes, believe anything.)

Soviet oppression, then, is a function of both ideological need and the political/strategic perceptions of the Russian leadership. Whatever its sources, it guarantees in perpetuity the absence of freedom among the people of Russia and Eastern Europe. We must disabuse ourselves of the fantasy of "convergence," the belief that Communist and Western states are fated over the long run to wind up with essentially similar social systems. Those who trace the line of development from Stalin to Brezhnev and extrapolate from there the emergence of a free society in the Soviet Union are peering not so much into the future as into infinity. In that long a run, as Franklin Roosevelt observed in another context, we are indeed all dead. There is no good reason to suppose that the US and the USSR have anything like a common historical destiny.

There are those who, exercising a kind of demented evenhandedness (to adopt Peter Berger's arresting phrase), argue that the democratic nations have no right to complain of Soviet tyranny since their own liberties are imperfectly distributed and since, out of strategic necessity, they occasionally make common cause with authoritarian and repressive governments. Thus, it is argued, America must either dissociate itself from such authoritarian allies and quasi-allies as South Korea, the Philippines, and El Salvador or convict itself of hypocrisy when it condemns Communist repression. Such efforts at moral symmetry sound persuasive only so long as one forgets that it is a real world we are dealing with, one in which nations must reconcile their behavior with the moral and political priorities that confront them. In such a world, no nation can participate in a meaningful and purposive way and still expect to operate with perfect moral consistency and unfailing moral delicacy.

Consider, for example, the case of World War II. There, America and its allies found themselves bound to one of the most monstrous regimes in world history—Stalin's Russia. They made that repugnant alliance because of higher strategic necessity: they dealt with Stalin in order more effectively to oppose Hitler. And they were morally right to do so. Few would argue, moreover, that their alliance with Stalin rendered their moral criticisms of Hitler invalid.

We encounter little difficulty justifying the alliance with Stalin because we see it in the context of the larger end—the defeat of Hitler—of which it was a part, and the clear moral superiority of the Allied forces in that overriding conflict allows us to put subsidiary events in proper perspective. So it should be today.

No one action or alliance can be judged in isolation or without careful consideration of the likely results of alternative action. There are occasions when the best we can do is choose the lesser evil. We have to guard, of course, against falling into moral cynicism in the means we employ to oppose Soviet repression and expansion, but so long as our ends are just, a counsel of moral perfectionism as to means can be rejected without excessive moral agonizing. There is nothing wrong in supporting an authoritarian South Korean government when we have every reason to believe that if we withdrew our support, the result for South Korea would be not the emergence of liberal democracy but invasion and defeat from the North.

The most crucial division in foreign policy attitudes today separates those who can, at least in a general sense, equate pursuit of American interests in the world with pursuit of international justice and those for whom that equation is problematic. And, as was true with Hitler, the best case for making the equation depends not on pretensions to peculiar virtue on our part but on knowledge of the objective evil of the system we oppose.

Poland reminds us that the Cold War is still alive, however weary we might be of the exertions, tensions, and insecurities it engenders. Those who warn against "cold war rhetoric" and "anti-Communist phobias" have allowed their utopian dreams of an end to international conflict to obscure the enduring reality of an aggressive Soviet empire that is, or ought to be, the enemy of decent people everywhere. The pursuit of detente makes sense only if we understand it as a means of keeping our necessary opposition to Soviet power at a threshold short of all-out war. If detente is taken to mean that all other interests—moral, political, and strategic—ought to be sacrificed to the creation of less-stressful relations with the USSR, then it deserves only our contemptuous dismissal. The two great imperatives of international relations today exist in frustrating tension with each other: we have to continue to search for ways of avoiding nuclear war without allowing that search to become the excuse whereby we give up our opposition to Soviet tyranny.

It is dispiriting, more than 35 years after the Cold War began, to face the prospect of its indefinite continuation. We have long since wearied of its ideological rigidities, its political posturing, its self-serving rhetorical conventions. We rightly suspect that it holds

If the views on evangelism of Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong reflect general opinion in the churches, then the faith of Protestant Christianity is in an advanced stage of decline.

temptations for us to moral complacency and to sacrifice of nuance and sophistication in our view of the world. Those temptations need to be resisted, but we must not, in seeking to escape their lures, forsake the struggle of which they are an unavoidable accompaniment. The struggle itself we have to continue because to give it up in frustration or loss of will would be to give up the values that define us as a nation. Poland ought to remind us of all that, and give us heart to persist in what we are given to do.

Christianity for Skeptics

For Christians, despair is a sin. It is, at times, only that knowledge that holds us, teetering at the brink, from plunging into the slough of despond as we contemplate the state of the contemporary church.

The most recent occasion of melancholy for us occurred in reading an article by Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong, "Evangelism When Certainty Is an Illusion," in the January 6-13 issue of *The Christian Century*. Since *The Christian Century* comes as close as any one journal can to representing mainstream Protestant Christianity in America, and since major articles in it presumably reflect broader streams of opinion within the church, Bishop Spong's essay may tell us a great deal about the malaise that currently afflicts the American churches.

If indeed this article reflects general opinion, then the faith of Protestant Christianity is in a late stage of decay. Evangelism, after all, has to do with the church's main business, the proclamation of the Gospel, and Dr. Spong's version of evangelism is so desiccated and apologetic, so lacking in vitality or conviction, so entirely devoid of hope or consolation, that one wonders who in his right mind would find anything at all in it to which he should pay heed, much less commit his life.

Bishop Spong counsels, in effect, that all planned programs of evangelism be given up. He offers this advice not in an anti-institutional mood but on the assumption that, being based in "the religious nostalgia of the past," such programs are inappropriate to "our post-Christian world." Active programs of evangelism assume "an exclusive Christian truth" (a scandalous proposition to the Bishop, as it has been to others) and they "flourish most in those churches in which the provincial consciousness is still in vogue." This traditional "imperialistic" evangelism (Dr. Spong uses this term several times without ever quite making clear what he means by it, though it is obviously not something to be desired), rooted as it is in "a narrow certainty," cannot appeal to the modern spirit, which knows that there is "no unchanging truth." Bishop Spong wants very much for the church to keep up to date: "To the degree that evangelism is rooted in the certainties of yesterday, it will always be an ineffective and even discordant tool for the church eager to enter the world of tomorrow." The possibility that the church might have something useful from its past to pass on to the world of tomorrow apparently has not occurred to the Bishop.

Any proclamation of the Gospel, Dr. Spong advises us, must be "honest," and, so far as we can make out, honesty for him consists in conceding that there is very little, if anything, that the church can say about God for sure. Dishonesty, he says, "occurs every time any religious body claims infallibility for any idea it presents. Christianity itself does not and cannot embrace the whole truth of God. So I can make no claims for God that are ultimate, and if I do, I am dishonest."

What, then, would constitute evangelistic honesty? "To be honest in our day is to embrace relativity as a virtue and to recognize that absolutism is a vice—any kind of absolutism, whether it be ecclesiastical, papal, biblical or the absolutism of sacred tradition. . . . We cannot give what we do not have. Certainty has never been our possession, but rather, our illusion."

Having approached the edge of agnosticism, the Bishop attempts to pull back. We can say *something* about God, he insists—but he never manages to convey with any precision what that something might be. Certainly it is not to be found in the places Christians have traditionally looked for it: "The Bible, the creeds, the sacred traditions are only pointers to God which must be transcended, explored in the light of each new day." (There may be those who, unlike Bishop Spong, do not relish the prospect of recreating their theological universe first thing each morning.) He holds to Christ in his way, but his way makes who or what he is clinging to difficult

Bishop Spong no doubt intends to salvage the faith by making it accessible to modernity, but his proposal requires not so much orthodox Christianity's adjustment as its dissolution.

of definition: Dr. Spong's Christ is "real" and "operative," but neither "ultimate" nor "definitive." What those rather crucial distinctions might signify, he does not bother to explain.

Whatever it is, it's all rather ethereal and open-ended. The life of Bishop Spong's ideal evangelist must be "radically open and unthreatened." The evangelist must further "be capable of listening deeply, be enormously sensitive, be able to risk, and possess the ability to embrace vulnerability and uncertainty as inseparable from life in Christ." This constitutes an unobjectionable (if banal) list of qualities useful to human relations counselors, but how those therapeutic qualities relate to the rather specific substantive affirmations of the Christian tradition is never made clear.

The traditional yearnings, hopes, and consolations that Christians have associated with life in Christ have no place in Bishop Spong's amorphous formulation: "The only reward Christ offers, I believe, is the Christian life of openness, vulnerability, expansion, risk, wholeness, love. Nothing else: not success, not heaven, not an escape from hell, not friends, not security, not peace of mind." Not faith either, one would gather.

What do we have here (aside from a portrait of a Bishop suffering from deep spiritual uncertainty)? In essential terms, we have a proposal for meeting the challenge of modernity by the simplest means possible—capitulating to it. There is no doubt that traditional faith is problematic for modern man in a way it was not earlier, but Bishop Spong's solution to the problem would destroy the deposit of faith that he as a priest is sworn to preserve. He no doubt intends to salvage the faith by making it accessible to modernity, but his proposal requires not so much orthodox Christianity's adjustment as its dissolution.

It is difficult to imagine what remains of Christian faith after Dr. Spong is through relativizing it. If Jesus Christ reveals nothing "ultimate" or "definitive" about the nature of God, what does it signify to speak of incarnation, salvation, or resurrection? If Jesus is to be seen as no more disclosive of God than any of a great batch of other plausible figures of reverence, why should he command the ultimate trust and commitment that Christianity has said the faith requires of us? What does Bishop Spong suppose the words *mean* when every Sunday he and the rest of us confess faith in the Trinitarian God of the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds? If one adopts the Bishop's perspective, it is difficult to see—and this is not meant flippantly—why one should not as well be a Druid as be a Christian. It seems extremely doubtful, in other words, that Christianity can undergo the Bishop's relativizing process and still have anything to say that it would make sense to attach transcendent meaning to.

One has to admire Bishop Spong's frankness; we suspect that even the notably latitudinarian Episcopalians might find it difficult to accept his views without objection. But one also has to be dismayed—and we mean no disrespect to the Bishop personally—at the spectacle of a prince of the church peddling skepticism as the form that the faith must currently take.

It is sometimes suggested—Bishop Spong himself so intimates—that the only alternative to his form of radical theological revisionism is the brand of fundamentalist/evangelical Christianity that holds to Christian truth-claims at the expense of intellectual depth or theological sophistication. There are times when one gazes at the world of American Christianity and wonders if that is not indeed the case. It is at those moments that the despair mentioned earlier becomes a temptation.

But there is no compelling reason, either in theory or practice, why we should be restricted to such a bleak choice. To avoid modernism, we need not resort to primitivism. There remains the great vital center of Christian belief and practice: the tradition of orthodox catholic faith. There are, of course, significant differences within catholic Christianity concerning matters of doctrine and practice, but those differences fade into insignificance when compared with the differences between the catholic center and the fundamentalist and modernist poles to either side. Those of us who can say the historic creeds without turning off our minds and yet without entering so many mental reservations as to reduce our confessions to blasphemy need to demonstrate to Bishop Spong and others like him that there exist alternatives to mindlessness other than faithlessness.

Early Snow

Someone is explaining that
The first day of snow
Is a stairway back to God.

A neighbor tosses his shovel
And shouts "Long Live Winter!"
Like a new believer:

All of us turn; he chases a dog;
The children laugh when he tumbles.
"Change!" he shouts, and I think
Of coins, watching this friend
Allow the dog to lick his face.

Gary Fincke

Two Imaginary Lectures to My Students in Freshman Composition

Moral Ideas in a Course on Writing

Harold J. Harris

(For fairly obvious reasons, what I say below could not very well, or at least effectively, be said to a class of freshmen there to learn how to write a weekly theme. If the occasion were ever to arise, however, for me to open the term with the first set of observations and to close it with the second, this is what I would tell them. It is what I now try to get through to them, if only implicitly and obliquely, but sometimes in a more explicit and reasonably straightforward fashion. At Kalamazoo College we call it Expository Prose, but a theme by any other name . . .)

Freshman Composition, unlike almost every other course that you will be taking over the next four years, is a course without any content and one which, for that among other reasons, emphasizes form above all else. It is not, then, what you say in your themes that matters so much as how you say it. It is not so much what Mencken, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and all the other writers that you will be reading say that matters nearly so much as how and how well they say what they do. My primary purpose in teaching you is to impart to you those skills in writing and reading that enable educated men and women to communicate with one another and with you in the most effective manner possible. How to say it best and most effectively, how to describe or explain or narrate or report or persuade or argue, this is what we will most of the time be considering.

Does that mean, then, that what you say, or for that matter what I say, really does not matter? That truth or falsity, good or evil, honesty or dishonesty are wholly beside the point where the writing of themes or the examination of professional writing is concerned? Am I, that is, asking you so long as you are in this class to act on the assumption that the ends of effective reading and writing justify whatever means to those ends? Surely if I believed that, and asked *you* to believe that and act out the consequences of that belief, I would be either a moral cretin or a moral monster, neither of which I know myself to be. Or perhaps, rather, I would be that not uncommon creature, a morally neutral and neutered professor, in this case of freshman composition.

Even that kind of professor would point out to you that in certain fairly obvious ways there is an ethical code underlying this course, and that it manifests itself first of all in the way that I treat you. I assume, that is, that each one of you is an individual and thus entitled to respect, consideration, and fairness in all of my dealings with you. "Dealings," however, smacks of the impersonal and the conventional. If this course succeeds then it will have gone beyond that—as important as it is for certain conventions to be observed and for a considerable number of procedures to be followed in what much of the time has to be in impersonal fashion—because something like a relationship will have developed between me and each of you individually as well as all of you collectively. It will not, mind you, be the relationship of friends. That is so not only because I am considerably older than you and must at times judge you and your work, but because friendship between one person, and he in a position of authority, and a whole group of people is impossible. Nevertheless there will be a genuine relationship, and that means that I will be aware of each of you in your individuality, and as not just so many students but as moral agents.

Responding in Human Terms

What that means, first of all, is that I will do my level best to see through whatever you say in class or write in your weekly theme to the person behind those spoken and written words who, like me, has certain needs, wants, desires, attitudes, and values. And beyond that, it means that when you and I look over your daily journal together, as well on at least two occasions during the next ten weeks, despite the fact that I have told you this is primarily a skills course in which of necessity and by design far more attention is paid to form than to content, I will respond to the human and personal element in your writing every bit as much as I will to your grammar, spelling, and style. I will even, but without pushing myself on you as a surrogate father or an amateur psychologist, speak to you about those emotional or moral or spiritual problems that are troubling you as you begin your college career. I will do so, however,

A native of New Jersey and a veteran of World War II, Harold Joel Harris *has been a member of the English Department at Kalamazoo College since 1954, with time off to teach at Michigan State in 1969 and at Bogazici University in Istanbul in 1975. He earned his B.A. and M.A. from Rutgers and his Ph.D. from Ohio State. He has published on a great variety of writers, most recently Paul Scott and Henry Green.*

Ideas have consequences, even the ideas expressed in something as seemingly innocent as a freshman theme. Arguments are not morally neutral and they should never be made just for effect.

without ever forgetting that my primary role is as your teacher, while your primary role is as my student.

Because this is a course in expository prose, much of what I have to teach you will be done through the agency of the weekly theme which you will be writing and I will be critiquing. And as I have already told you, most of my attention will be paid to the formal aspects of that theme, meaning such things as grammar, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, coherence, etc. You will decide each time on the content to fill that theme form, and if your content does not say what I should like it to, politically or economically or morally, so be it.

That hardly means, however, that there are no ethical considerations whatsoever entering into your writing or my critiquing. Whether you are describing a person or narrating an event or trying to persuade someone that they ought to do whatever you think they would be well advised to do, you are expected to be as scrupulously honest as you can be and never argue (or anything else, for that matter) just for effect. Ideas have consequences, even the ideas expressed in something as seemingly innocent as a freshman theme. If you put forth an idea that has its premise such an unthought-out notion as, say, that rural blacks in the South do not really possess feelings or any kind of self-conception and therefore do not care what disposition is made of them by their social superiors, then you are being guilty of a species of intellectual dishonesty that is well on its way to being moral dishonesty or worse.

Taking Morality and Religion Seriously

Still, since this is not a course in political theory or sociology or philosophy, I will not expect of you either the same rigor or the same comprehensiveness when it comes to dealing in your themes with political or other ideas. What I have every right to expect, though, along with your regard to form is that serious thought and regard for people—most ideas have something to say, no matter how indirectly, about people—that is the necessary prelude to any genuine moral thinking or behavior.

And if your political ideas should be connected to, perhaps even grow out of, your moral convictions, and those in turn, as is most likely, be grounded in your religious beliefs? Then I would expect you, indeed encourage you, to choose those subjects and develop those ideas that best enable you to bring those convictions and beliefs into play. The last thing I would want you to do would be to write always in a morally neutral fashion, and as if religion had absolutely nothing to do with freshman theme writing.

The *next*-to-last thing I would want you to do would be to engage in proof-texting or any kind of spiritual strong-arming: quoting the Old Testament as I once had a student do in order to "prove" that women simply have no business even thinking about equal rights, or asserting that God has told you that the poor shall always be with us and that therefore all welfare programs are bad will get you nowhere as a theme writer. Now, that is assuredly not to say that you cannot argue against equal rights for women or demand an end to welfare, rather that you must develop an argument instead of merely invoking some heavenly authority and letting it go at that.

I have been talking so far about your writing, but you are of course aware that along with it we shall be paying a fair amount of attention to the writing of professionals: professional historians, sociologists, political scientists, *et al.* As with your themes, the articles and essays of these men and women will receive our attention largely on the side of their form. But at least as much as will be the case with your writing, whenever the content of their writing seems to demand it we will consider that content. Being neither historian nor sociologist nor political theorist, and teaching a course intended primarily to generate thinking (and behaving) in certain ways about the closely related skills of reading and writing, I will not pursue, or at least not very far, such questions as: Is what this writer saying necessarily true and valid and correct and as comprehensive and well-informed as it might be? Still, I will quite often raise questions that without for a moment failing to take into account formal matters will nevertheless be apparent to you as being informed by my moral awareness. So when we examine George Orwell's "A Hanging" I will try to get you to see how Orwell's profound conviction that capital punishment is humanly wrong and therefore morally wrong finds expression in a beautifully-crafted narrative to whose crafting I will devote most of my attention.

Or, a different kind of example, when we analyze Loren Baritz's introduction to the volume on the 1920s that he edited (*The Culture of the Twenties,* 1970), I will want to know of you what reason you have to think that Baritz, like practically every writer who deals with the past, has a particular point of view, slant, and even bias which everywhere manifests itself. What, I shall ask you, do you make of a passage like this: "After the Volstead Act and with peace, the urban-village coalition broke, showing the determined core of Prohibitionism to be where it always was: in the Methodist and Baptist churches, in villages and towns all across the nation, among Southerners fearful of drunken Negroes and employers wanting sober laborers and afraid of drunken agitators, and among nativists who believed that swarthy and alien types would commit their worst excesses if given access to booze." What I should want you to under-

Not all ideas have a moral dimension or component to them: mathematical and chemical ideas, for two, more often than not occasion no moral thinking or decision-making on our part.

stand about the writing here, and what I fully intend to point out to you if you do not see it yourselves, is the way that through a careful selection of details and an even more careful choice of words Baritz has loaded the deck so that none of his readers is likely even to take seriously those Methodists and Baptists who sincerely believed in temperance, much less to take seriously their ideas on that subject. This is the kind of disingenuousness that I regard, and I should think you would too, as intellectually dishonest.

Considering Sacco and Vanzetti

There is another passage from this same piece of writing, this time on the subject of the famous Sacco-Vanzetti case, that I will be asking you to take a close look at. It is this one: "The alien threat was supposedly proved by the arrest and conviction of two semi-literate Italian radicals, Sacco and Vanzetti, confessed pacifists and draft-dodgers. Arrested for murder, in a trial dominated by the issues of patriotism and radicalism, they were actually convicted of being alien." What they were "actually" convicted of, as Baritz surely must know since everyone who knows how to read would have learned it from every single account of their trial that has been written, was the murder of two payroll guards. And, besides being pacifists and draft-dodgers, the two men were Anarchists, a fact that Baritz rather conveniently overlooks—as well he might have, since in the first two decades of this century it was not uncommon for Anarchists on both sides of the Atlantic to engage in political assassinations or murders that were politically motivated. Then there is of course the fact that as Francis Russell and almost every other writer who in recent years has investigated the case has concluded, the weight of evidence is overwhelming that Sacco was indeed guilty as charged while Vanzetti almost certainly knew about the murder. However, even if there were considerable doubt as to the guilt of either man, and the concession were to be made (although I for one am unwilling to make it) that Baritz had the right to conceal the fact of Sacco and Vanzetti having been Anarchists, we would still be left with the monstrous accusation he brings against the judge, the jury, and the whole system of American justice—that the two were "convicted of being alien." Here Baritz is being a good deal more than disingenuous; he is telling what he must know to be an outright lie, and one that can only be calculated to influence his readers in the direction of the most profound moral criticism of their leaders. All things considered, then, the conclusion seems to me inescapable that Baritz is that worst of all writers, the technically skillful one (and endowed with a fine style as well) who is morally corrupt.

Why then, you may be asking yourselves, would I want to teach Baritz in the first place? Because both his introduction and the book that it introduces represent an excellent way in to a period of American history that the English Department has agreed provides an ideal subject for freshmen to study and on which to write research papers. And because that introduction lends itself so very well—something that I did not even know when we first settled upon the book for use in the course—to the kind of formal analysis I have just sketched in that takes into account a writer's content and does so in such a way as to demonstrate how his or her bias can operate, sometimes openly and honestly, but at other times surreptitiously and dishonestly.

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Here we are at the end of ten weeks of themes, journal-writing, that big research paper, and our examination together of Baritz and all those writers included in his *The Culture of the Twenties*, and now we are ready for a look back at what we have done and you have learned. There are, I hope, all those useful things you now know about how to punctuate and paragraph, how to compile bib cards, how to tell the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning, how to—etc., etc. This is, as I told you at the beginning of the term, a skills course, and learning skills of whatever variety always involves learning how to do something. But learning, especially in the liberal arts tradition, necessarily involves the taking in and the giving out of ideas, and that is what you have been up to these last ten weeks, along with coming to understand how to do better the writing of papers. Now, not all ideas have a moral dimension or component to them: mathematical and chemical ideas, for two, more often than not occasion no moral thinking or decision-making on our part. However, most of the ideas you have come across in your reading for this course, and a fair number of those that you have had occasion to express in your own writing, *have* of necessity demanded some kind of moral response from you—and every bit as much, from *me*. So even in a contentless course like expository prose, and that is the way it is supposed to be in a liberal arts college, you have been asked to think critically as well as to learn to approach ideas and opinions generally, in yours and everyone else's writing, in a more critical fashion. Doing so, I should like to think, will equip you not only to understand and thereby enjoy more your world, but also to face that world as better men and women. At least now you cannot say that that opportunity, and that challenge, have been absent because only comma splices and the reason for writing *its* instead of *it's* have been beguiling you.

More than Merely Means / A Poet's Apology

Jill Baumgaertner

Through the mundane bursts the transcendent: geranium petals flattened in the soggy grass; bright, quick bracelets on a tall woman's arm; the rustled air of my first Chicago autumn still smoking, a memory woven into the wool and pencils of my everyday. Always in all ways the ordinary becomes extraordinary through juxtaposition. What is the sacramental except that which is both tangible and unapproachable, that which is both a mystery and a handle on the mystery, that which is human and divine, the metaphysical connection of disparate elements?

Poetry is an intensity of spirit into flesh, God into man, and so Christ as Word is God's purest poem to us. This poetry, like dance, is the motion towards, the exhalation of the invisible, the inhalation of the visible.

Slashing into the day are reminders of the unpoetic, of the disconnected: the Eisenhower expressway backs up even to Mannheim Road and I can't get home; the manuscript is returned because of insufficient postage and it can't be read; a student needs help with commas and he can't see why. The student's eyes are on the *New Yorker* covers on my office wall, not at all on the separa-

Stages: Becoming Verbal

i.
intimation

Driving through
The fields waft silence
A blank sky
Lilies languorous on groping
stems
Giant white bells
Clang-less
Flowers
breaking
the soft stem-stalks
Cornlilies rustling the
Husks of whispers
The brush a breeze strand
across an arm
The silks that are not flicked
Like someone else's memory.

ii.
discovery

Stepped outside to smell the morning's muzzled damp.
Lifted that moss quilt,
the soft foam pressure of
a tender froth.
Found under that stuffed pallet
jumbles of tiny flowers,
scatterings of crowded flocks.
Also
hyacinths in the sandbox
And in the shed
shelves of severed leaves,
rumpled blossoms.

iii.
revelation

The words are twines
around
a stick.
The words are paleae stretched around the child—
a mother filling her robe with her children.
The words are white paper stapled into ivy.
The words are
roots
pricking
earth,
a tense exposed trunk.
The words are raw splashes of tomatoes and milk.
(Last summer in Flat Rock
a truckload from Georgia toppled,
smattered three cars and the road
was iron twists and peaches)
The words are cream and lettuce in an aching brew
and my cup
the hot white cardboard is lifted to my . . .
Also the Word unpeels the soft white fruit.

Jill Baumgaertner *teaches English at Wheaton College and is Poetry Editor of* The Cresset.

tion of dependent from independent clauses. Whether he knows it or not, he really longs for a leap into the metaphoric, into a connective discourse, into a painterly language which enlivens the abstract. These commas are boring to him because they seem so autonomous. If he could connect commas to breath and see them as symbols, then they would mean more, but learning to breathe a language is something like learning to play a musical instrument, or learning ballet at the barre—tedious at first.

The poetry *is* always there (even in the commas), ever shoving itself into my limited vision. There I see the Sudden Service gas station on a back road in North Carolina, Jung's Coiffures on the north side of Chicago, that man on the bus performing endless motions—as if he's on an assembly line with nothing to assemble that we can see. It's all very visible to him, though. And the passengers move away, press into each other, so we will not be included in his hallucinations. Perhaps we think we will be reduced, we will cross over into that silent unseen if his eyes snag upon ours.

The poet, the dancer, the sacramental, our Lord, intrude on the everyday world in similar ways. Pure movement, total gesture, exquisite balance, a circular motion which turns inward to intense listening and outward to transfer the abstract to the absolutely concrete. And we press away from beauty because we think we cannot understand it.

In one of Rodin's dance sculptures which I saw at the National Gallery of Art this past summer, the dancer, foot reaching over her head, holds a stiff, straight leg almost parallel to her body. This leg is the tree trunk center, all strength, tension, and mass. Naturally, the leg in midair cannot support the dancer's body even though it seems to be the strong center of balance. But the other leg which should bear the dancer's weight barely trails the ground. It is delicately turned, almost relaxed. The leg in midair carries the support for the figure whose arms languorously encircle a restful face. Where is gravity here? The trunk leg is steady, the head resting, the ground leg trailing. Here are both repose and total vigorous motion. Here is balance with an impossible center. Here is dance as the spirit's expression.

This tension between motion and repose is similar to the tension between visibility and invisibility. What seem to exist as mutually exclusive phenomena actually exist in relationship. God and man. Body and spirit, the blossom and the fruit, the fruit and the taste, a breathing balance of inner and outer.

So that is why my own words must strain to approach that Word. Into the mundane slips the extraordinary and transforms words bitten into my fingers, deep whirls of anger or old sunsets, clichés and pure feelings, transforms them into melon pools and sizzled slaps. His word and His Word always measure mine and me, but finally, what a relief that all I need do is simply accept grace-fully.

The Baptist

John stood in the shallows
of the water
more sunken root
than man
his eyes fixed and pitiless
as the desert sun
that sucked the river dry . . .

the man watering his
donkey
paused
tied a bit of rag about his head

the small crowd
on the river banks
jostled each other

some laughed
a stone was thrown

and the westering sun
laid long shadows across the burnt
hills
and the fierce heat snapped
on the rocks
like coals
as one by one
the people wrapped
cloaks about them
and
dreaming of firelight
moved away

still he stood
deep in the water
his hands in air
like claws to drag
some terrible thing
he sensed hovered near

and the night sounds breathed
in bush and tree
the sand trembled and lifted
as the winds came
and the one camp fire glowed
red against the night
the donkey easy against his tether

and a slivered moon
rose leaf by leaf
into the night sky
where Jesus stood in the river shadows
his cloak already sinking
in the dark water . . .

J. T. Ledbetter

The Challenge of Artificial Intelligence

Reconsidering What It Means to be Human

James Caristi

As faculty members of Lutheran institutions, we often find ourselves concerned with articulating what it means to be human. This occurs, for example, whenever we deal with the question of values, or whenever we make decisions regarding the general education requirements of undergraduates. It seems to me, however, that the understanding of our own humanity is being affected by developments in the field of artificial intelligence. My purpose in these remarks is to explain why I feel that a sensitivity toward artificial intelligence is now required in our attempts to come to terms with who we are.

"Artificial intelligence"? At best this seems to be a strange juxtaposition of words, and at worst it must be a contradiction in terms. Our intelligence sets us apart from other animals. It is a primary component of our personality. It is associated only with complex forms of life. It hardly seems to have anything to do with artificialty of any kind. Yet researchers in artificial intelligence seem to have as their ultimate goal either the development of a computer "brain" superior to ours in most ways, or the duplication or simulation of all facets of our human intelligence. Perhaps the best thing to do at this point is to examine more closely the types of things researchers in artificial intelligence are actually trying to do. We may then be in a better position to assess the impact of artificial intelligence upon our notions of what it means to be human.

One of the earliest attempts to use computers in duplicating things that humans do naturally was in the area of mechanical translation of language. This endeavor was heavily funded by the government in the early fifties to translate vast amounts of information from Russian to English. One of the well-known stories in this context has to do with a large university which had supposedly developed a mechanical translator. When someone from the government tested the program with the expression, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," the program translated it into Russian and then back into English as "the meat is rotten, but the booze is holding out." The university's grant was not renewed. In any case, researchers realized that translation of language was not going to be as easy as it was first imagined to be. Research continues today with extremely sophisticated programs which are capable of doing a satisfactory job, but only in severely restricted situations. A universal mechanical translator will not be produced in the near future.

Game-Playing is Not Frivolous

Game playing is a very popular area of artificial intelligence. It is not considered a frivolous pursuit because the games attempted all require the ability to make decisions based on some sort of logical analysis. As we learn more about how to set long and short term goals and develop strategic plans in the microcosm of a game, insights will be gained which will enable useful decision-making programs to exist. The development of good game-playing programs has been fairly successful. A checker-playing program has won a state championship, a backgammon program has beaten a world backgammon champion, and the best chess programs today can beat all but about one per cent of chess players in this country. The programs vary considerably in their approaches to the games. Some of them do nothing but compute as many possible moves as they can within their limits of time and storage space. Some do no looking ahead whatsoever, and rely entirely on heuristics, that is, strategic principles which are programmed in. Most programs do some looking ahead to a depth indicated by the heuristics being used. For example, a chess program can be instructed to calculate more moves when the sequence being examined involves captures.

At one time, researchers felt that programs could easily be developed which would learn from their experiences. In fact, some game-playing programs were written which started with only the knowledge of the rules of the game and then learned from their mistakes. It turned out, however, that significant problems arose when the game involved was non-trivial. Researchers realized that a good learning program could not be written until thought, inference, perception, knowledge representation, and even intended program output

James Caristi *is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Valparaiso University. He received his B.A. from Florida State University and his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, and taught for several years at Texas Lutheran College. In addition to his articles on mathematical fixed point theory, he has led several seminars discussing Douglas Hofstadter's* Godel, Escher, Bach, *and is interested in the relationships between the humanities and the foundations of mathematics. This essay was originally presented at the Association of Lutheran College Faculties conference at Valparaiso University on October 3, 1981.*

If success were attained in a significant fraction of the proposed research in artificial intelligence, many of our characteristically human traits could be assumed by machines.

were better understood. Consequently, attention has shifted more to these problems. Even something as simple sounding as the management of the computer's memory becomes a significant problem when the amount of data to be handled is very large.

Programs have been developed that are capable of proving mathematical theorems in geometry and logic. In some cases, the proofs that the programs generated were not previously known by the programmers. In a related area, a program functioning as a "mathematician's assistant" was instrumental in developing a proof of the famous "Four Color Theorem." Nevertheless, no program has yet succeeded in either proving a totally new theorem or even generating an actually new proof.

A major area of research in artificial intelligence is the study of perception. The analysis of visually perceived items includes recognition of printed matter, discrimination of Chinese characters, and the identification of objects in a picture. Research in aural perception has been so successful that "talking terminals" for the visually impaired are now on the market. These can be programmed to recognize a small spoken vocabulary from a particular person and can speak whatever can be printed on the terminal.

The attempts to understand language by computer have led to the development of "knowledge representation languages." The central idea here is to identify word with "prototype" rather than word with "definition." The "prototype" includes definitions, examples, and contexts in which the word could be applicable. "Knowledge representation languages" are intended to operate more like the way the human brain is thought to work in learning new vocabulary.

Finally in this survey of topics in artificial intelligence, we must be aware of efforts to create works of art by computer. In addition to visual art works, some of which have been displayed in prominent art galleries, we find production of poetry and prose, and production of tonal and atonal music.

After spending so much time discussing the diverse areas into which artificial intelligence researchers have stuck their human noses, it is not difficult to see why the field is controversial. If success were attained in a significant fraction of the research which has been proposed, many of our characteristically human traits could be assumed by machines. We must now examine more closely how our definitions of man could be affected.

One could say it all started with Aristotle. After all, the Aristotelian definition of man as *rational* animal (since the "lower animals" seem to possess emotions, but not reason) is an extremely popular one. But what happens when machines are built (as they have been) which can accept high school algebra word problems and solve them? What are we to think when machines can prove theorems? Regardless of what we mean by "solve" or "prove," we are forced to reconsider what we mean by "rational animal."

Closely related to "reason" is "intelligence." It is an unfortunate fact that no definition of "intelligence" is acceptable across disciplinary lines. This has led one worker in artificial intelligence to define as "intelligence" whatever has not yet been simulated by computer. Alan Turing, one of the early prominent figures in computer science, devised an intriguing test for "intelligence" in a machine. The "Turing Test" involves placing a human and a computer in separate sealed rooms, each of which can communicate with human interrogators only by typed messages transmitted by a terminal. The human interrogators' task is to determine which is the human and which is the computer by asking questions through the terminal. The human in the sealed room attempts to convince the interrogators of his/her humanity, while the computer attempts to convince the interrogators that it is human. If the interrogators cannot decide which is the human, then, according to Turing, we can say that the computer is intelligent. Even lacking an acceptable definition of intelligence, we would have to admit that the machine possessed at least as much intelligence as the human (not to mention the interrogators). Currently there is no computer which can come close to passing the Turing Test, that is, being mistaken for a human by human interrogators. Nevertheless, we again face the problem of determining to what extent our humanity is tied to our intelligence.

Humanity and Moral Discernment

If we are to believe Kant, our intelligence and our ability to reason do not make us human anyway. Our humanity, according to Kant, derives from our ability to distinguish good from evil and to act accordingly. We possess the freedom to use reason, and it is this freedom, epic and tragic, that makes us of infinite value. Hence, to deal with what it means to be human is to deal with freedom or its absence. Of course, the word "freedom" is perhaps the most problematic word in the entire philosophical vocabulary. In the context of this discussion, freedom and determinism will be taken as opposites. Assuming, then, that humans are free (at least not totally deterministic machines), what would it mean to say that a computer is free?

It is evident that computers are ultimately deterministic; their output is attributable to the programs residing in some electronic form within elementary electronic components. Many people claim that the human mind is similarly deterministic, in that its actions are based upon neural firings. Somehow, though, humans

are capable of transcending the apparent determinism, and many explanations for this have been given by those who believe that humans can act freely. One such thesis is that free acts are a result of the interaction of a large number of complex levels, the highest of which is the mind and the lowest of which is the neural level. If we understood completely the neural level, would we then be able to understand the mind? In this setting, the freedom-determinism dichotomy seems to be related to the problem of wholism versus reductionism. Can the whole be understood by knowing about each of its parts, or does the behavior of the whole sometimes defy understanding by those who comprehend fully all of its parts?

The reductionist point of view does not seem to make much sense when trying to understand contemporary computer products. By knowing everything there is to know about what the electronic bits in a computer can do, does that mean that we can explain a complex payroll processing program in those terms? There is now a tremendous gulf separating the level at which the machine operates and the level at which a human user interacts with the computer. For example, a business executive knowing next to nothing about computers can quickly learn to use a query language to find out about production levels in his company without ever being aware of the fact that there may be five intermediate processes (levels) that translate his request into electronic instructions. There are so many buffering levels separating the user from the electronics that, in complex applications, it seems that the user is simply carrying on a conversation with a human. The increasing number of buffering levels seems to make reductionism a relatively useless way of understanding what is happening. It is also currently the case that computers are being designed and manufactured which are so complex that they cannot be fully tested. Companies like IBM put new products on the market which, even after having been thoroughly tested, develop "bugs." There is no longer any way of being sure that the computer that has been produced will do what was intended and only what was intended. A certain amount of effective uncertainty has entered the development of computers. It may be as silly to say that a computer will only do what it's told to do as it is to say that a human can be understood totally in terms of heredity.

While it may yet be argued that reductionism continues to explain what computers do, it does not seem useful to even attempt to use reductionism to explain the outward performance of a computer. Instead, an explanation that relies on intermediate constructions is valuable. Wholism does not necessarily deny reductionism; it may simply say that the whole is better understood by not trying to piece together all of its parts, but by looking at another model. And if wholism provides a better way of understanding computers, then we should not be surprised if our computers someday perform what appear to be free acts. The wholistic model which might best explain things at that point might be a human one.

Other presumably unique characterizations of humanity include the power of abstraction, the propensity for mimicry, the ability to associate ideas by similarity, and the desire for self-improvement. Yet researchers in artificial intelligence are now attempting to replicate even these human traits. Quite a few people, including scientists, have been disturbed by this. These critics feel that the research is not worthwhile because it is futile: computers have not participated in culture, they have no soul, they have no sense of the good, cannot appreciate irony, or lack some other human characteristic which denies forever their humanity.

Thinking What It Means to be Human

It seems to me that the issue is not whether computers can be human, but whether we can learn anything about ourselves by attempting to simulate human types of activities in computers. I have attempted to describe how the study of artificial intelligence has already forced us to look in new ways at what we mean by reason, intelligence, and freedom. Just as there is no acceptable definition of intelligence, there is no absolute definition of what it means to be human. Indeed, the central concern of the humanities is to be constantly trying to articulate and understand our humanity. Nowadays, however, we must be prepared for the possibility that many of the things we identify with our humanity may be embodied in an electronic device. The possibility may be denied, but not ignored.

If we wish to deny the possibility that computers can be successfully used to mimic most human activities, we must realize that we will confront opposition from diverse sources. In an age of specialization, one of the few multidisciplinary areas surrounds artificial intelligence. Besides computer scientists, respected scholars in philosophy, psychology, neurophysiology, and linguistics are doing research in the field. Journals such as *Intelligence* and *Cognitive Science* solicit articles from many perspectives dealing with the relationship between the computer and the mind.

I am convinced that the computer provides us with an arena in which we can study facets of humanity. I see it as the equivalent for the humanities of the laboratory for the sciences. The computer can provide us with ways of testing hypotheses and raising new questions about our minds and personalities. Experiments along these lines are already being performed. We are obliged to at least be aware of them.

Taking Life Seriously

The Case Against Roe v. Wade

Richard Stith

(Editor's Note: What follows is the testimony of Professor Stith before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments on the subject of proposed amendments relating to abortion. Professor Stith testified by invitation on November 12, 1981, in favor of the proposed "Human Life Federalism Amendment," which reads: "A right to abortion is not secured by this Constitution. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to restrict and prohibit abortion; provided that a law of a state which is more restrictive than a law of Congress shall govern.")

Let me first remark in passing that I am not entirely satisfied with any of the proposed amendments. As someone sympathetic both to the pro-life position and to democratic socialism, I would like to see both the unborn and the born guaranteed a right to life in the full sense: that is, a right not only against public or private violence, but also against the evils of poverty, disease, ignorance, class prejudice, and the like. The right to life ought to include a right to that level of welfare minimally necessary for a decent existence. However, I realize such a right is not under consideration today, so I will go on to the matters here at issue.

As you know, the *Roe v. Wade* decision grants a constitutional right to abortion throughout pregnancy. More specifically, there is a right to end what the Court calls the "potential life" of the fetus for any reason whatsoever prior to viability, and for any reason of maternal health (including "familial" or "psychological" "well-being") thereafter.[1] This decision and its progeny (ironic term) turn the early stages of our common human species into absolutely private property—virtually unlimited by public, fetal, or even paternal interests.[2]

As a teacher of comparative law, I find this decision unique in the world. No other modern domestic state or foreign nation has ever, to my knowledge, privatized the value of new human life to this degree. No one, except our Court, has ever left the unborn entirely without public protection for the first six months of gestation and with only nominal protection even just before birth. Moreover, this extremist position has been imposed on our country not as a matter of temporary legislative experimentation, but by practically unchangeable judicial fiat—and this with scarcely any principled basis in the Constitution.[3]

All this, however, is beside my main point today: Whatever criticisms may be levelled at the outcome of *Roe v. Wade*, far worse in my opinion is its reasoning. In order to sustain its new right to abortion, the Court pretends not to know whether actual human life ever exists prior to birth. Indeed, it treats, and requires the states to treat, unborn members of our species as merely the "potentiality of human life," even in the last trimester of pregnancy, with the lethal consequences detailed above.

To me, the greatest wrong done the unborn is just this failure to take them into consideration as actual living human beings. The Court has closed its eyes to the reality of abortion and has blindfolded our legislatures. I am not arguing for absolutism: I can understand (though I disagree with) someone who favors capital punishment as a necessary evil, arguing that the interests of felons are outweighed by the interests of society. But I would be dismayed and dumbfounded by someone who claimed that felons had lost the right to be considered actual human beings whose interests should at all be taken into account. Similarly, I can respect and live in disagreement with those who admit and regret that abortion destroys a little human being, but who honestly believe private freedom to be more important than a young life.[4] But if we have any compassion for what we ourselves once were or any sense of the intrinsic dignity of life, we ought at least to acknowledge the un-

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Richard Stith *is Professor of Law at Valparaiso University. He is active in the pro-life movement and has published widely on abortion and on other subjects. His article, "Thinking About Ecology: Resource Management, Recognition of Rights, and Phenomenological Truth," appeared in the November, 1981* Cresset.

[1] *Roe v. Wade* 93 S. Ct. 705, 732-33 (1973) and *Doe v. Bolton*, 93 S. Ct. 739, 746 (1973). In the recent funding decision, *Harris v. McRae*, 100 S. Ct. 2671, 2687-2688 (1980), it was taken for granted by all parties and by the Court that even in the third trimester maternal health broadly defined outweighs the "potential life" of the fetus.

[2] See *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth*, 96 S. Ct. 2831 (1976).

[3] See the consensus of most academics on this matter well summarized by Senator Orrin Hatch in the *Congressional Record* for September 21, 1981, at S10195.

[4] Most of the rest of the world appears to admit that abortion takes a human life, even when the practice is defended. For example, a West German Constitutional Court dissenting opinion supported the decriminalization of abortion in the first trimester, but nonetheless stated:

> [T]he life of each individual human being is self-evidently a central value of the legal order. It is *uncontested* [emphasis added] that the constitutional duty to protect this life also includes its preliminary stages prior to birth.

"West German Abortion Decision," translated by J. D. Gorby and R. E. Jonas, 9 *John Marshall Journal of Practice and Procedure* 605, 663 (1976).

born we cannot or will not save.

Nor is this callousness toward the unborn without its effect on the moral and legal rights of the rest of us. For consider: the Court is saying that after eight months of gestation a child in the womb is still only a potential life which can be intentionally destroyed for the sake of familial or psychological well-being, while another eight-month-old fetus born prematurely is an actual human life with full human rights. But the two beings are developmentally identical, differing only in location and mode of nutrition and oxygenation. Would an I.V. and an oxygen tent make someone not alive or not human? Clearly not. Would someone who really cared about the rights of new-born infants completely ignore identical infants endangered in the womb? I think not. He or she would take them into account to the same degree in or out of the womb,[5] even if other interests (say, privacy) provided a greater counterbalance of value prior to birth.

Therefore, and this is my fundamental point, if we do not take the interests of the unborn as actual living human beings into consideration, we cannot logically claim to really care about the right to life even *after* birth. If we are willing lethally to ignore someone when he or she is hidden from sight, we cannot care sincerely and in principle about his or her life when it is in full view. In graphic terms, the nurse who both cares for premature babies and does quasi-elective late-term abortions is involved in a contradiction which cannot be resolved except by either ceasing to do abortions or by becoming equally callous to life after birth.

Put more generally, *Roe v. Wade,* by arbitrarily ignoring the actual existence of life prior to birth, commits us to a nominalist or conventionalist view of human rights.[6] If the definition of when a human being exists can be arbitrary, then the human rights which supposedly accompany that existence likewise are recognized arbitrarily. Such rights are subject to rescission at any time.

Of course, as long as we are strong enough or valuable enough, we are no doubt not in personal danger of losing our rights. But the safest as well as the highest path in the defense of civil rights is to patrol the perimeters of principle, to close up every single opening. For to affirm a single arbitrary exception to a principle, such as the right to life, means that the whole remaining structure can no longer *logically* be defended. Indeed, already anyone who arbitrarily disregards human life can rightly claim that he is only doing what the Court has done. If he is punished, this can seem to him only an act of power rather than one of equal justice.

Reason as a Weapon Against Power

There is one further harm done by *Roe v. Wade* to civil rights in general: It eliminates reason as a weapon against power. If the fundamental facts on which the law is based are to be finally and arbitrarily defined by the Court to suit its wishes, then no one can even sensibly object to the laws which govern us. Pro-lifers, for example, argue that certain facts (such as the heartbeat, brainwaves, or physical appearance of the unborn) indicate that abortion kills a human being, and they are frequently met with the response that there is no point in claiming abortion kills since the Court has decided the issue once and for all. Such a world is an Orwellian nightmare, just as in *1984* one could not sensibly be a pacifist because war was officially defined as peace. If the factual concepts on which legal decisions are based are stipulatively defined in ways which can support only the results reached, the possibility of reasoned public criticism is eliminated.

What can be done to reverse these effects of *Roe v. Wade*? To my mind, the simplest and best would be simply to recognize the developing human embryo and fetus to be a constitutional person under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. As a person, he or she would have to be taken into consideration in all legislation related to pregnancy, and could no longer be declared officially to have only a potential or doubtful existence. Of course, even persons do not have absolute rights, and equal protection does not mean identical treatment but only non-arbitrary treatment. Calling the unborn legal persons for purposes of the right to life means only that their lives cannot be surrendered without a compelling state interest. And, to my mind, the unique conditions of pregnancy—such as privacy, emotional distress, and sexual inequality—together with public concerns such as the difficulty of enforcing child protective laws make it reasonable, for example, not to punish the woman criminally at all—and instead to focus on other ways to limit abortion (such as by requiring prior counselling, as was done in West Germany, or by penalizing

[5] I am assuming here that neither ignorance nor religious revelation can be invoked here constitutionally to allege that the minor physical differences in and out of the womb are metaphysically major. Other ages may well have been able honestly to draw lines which modern medical knowledge and the secular state prevent us from doing.

[6] The conventionalism of *Roe v. Wade* is also shown by the fact that Justice Blackmun appeals to the conclusions of past ages and religions to support his position, without inquiring into the validity of the fact and value premises supporting such conclusions. If he wanted to find out a true or right answer regarding abortion, he would obviously have to make such an inquiry. (We would not think it a sufficient argument for the permissibility of slavery that most ages have thought it justified.)

Instead, he seems to treat the definition of life as a matter of mere social convention. See *Roe* at 715 ff., 730. *Cf.* footnote 5 *supra.*

Personhood for the unborn would not lock us into a rigid policy of treating abortion legally as murder. It would only ensure that the unborn's interests are taken into account.

the abortionist).

Personhood for the unborn, in other words, would not lock us into some kind of rigid policy of treating abortion legally as murder. It would ensure only that the unborn's interests are taken into account like anyone else's, that we make a good faith effort to protect them as part of our community, not that their interests become the whole of our concerns. Even calling the right to life "paramount" or adding the phrase "no unborn person shall be deprived of life by any other person," in my opinion, can express no more than an ideal. It does not mandate the enforcement of this ideal by absolute means which do not take into account the other interests at stake.

Unfortunately, however, a personhood-conferring amendment may be politically difficult to pass. This is so not because such an amendment would be in fact overly rigid, but because it can easily be distorted in the minds of non-lawyers to appear to be absolutist. By acting as though the word "equal" meant "identical," opponents of fetal personhood are already claiming that passage of a Human Life Amendment would cause every woman having an abortion to be prosecuted for murder, and everyone miscarrying to be liable for manslaughter. We may well regret such scare tactics, which are reminiscent of the equally misleading claims so far used to defeat the ERA (such as the argument that it would require coeducational bathrooms). But they are nevertheless real and, in my opinion, make the success of a personhood HLA highly doubtful at this time.

It is the great merit of SJR 110, the "Human Life Federalism Amendment," that it cannot be accused of locking the nation into any kind of absolutism in either direction. By leaving abortion up to Congress and the state legislatures to regulate, it permits divergent and evolving legislation, the correction of mistakes, and open-minded debate by all concerned. And, alone among all the proposals before you, it clearly rebukes the Supreme Court for intruding into the realm reserved for legislation.

Removing the Blindfold of Roe v. Wade

Does it also overcome the greatest flaw in *Roe v. Wade* to which I have pointed: pretending, and requiring the states to pretend, not to know whether actual human life exists prior to birth? Now, the amendment proposed does not point to the unborn child and say "Look, there is a person." But it does remove the blindfold fastened onto all of us by *Roe v. Wade*. It does permit us to look and see and conceptualize the facts for ourselves. And I am confident that for the most part the unborn will be acknowledged and protected—primarily because (in the absence of religious myth) there is no non-arbitrary way to exclude unborn children from the concept of "human being" without also excluding newborn infants, an exclusion which is still intuitively unacceptable to most people.

An arbitrary or nominalist definition of who is a human being will thus no longer be required by our Constitution. The precedent for further mandatory dehumanization is excised.

At the same time, reason can again appeal to facts against power. The *1984* axiom that "war is peace" is no longer official policy. Of course, neither is it stated in the amendment that "war is war," but frankly I am satisfied to be able to argue the issue by appealing directly to the facts and concepts at issue.

Under this amendment, we may find ourselves in the minority, but we will not find ourselves excluded from debate by prior stipulated definitions of the beings whose interests are at issue. We may disagree with our fellow citizens, but we will not find ourselves alienated from the fundamental law of our land. And even in disagreement there is a bond to our neighbors in the hope of persuasion: political dialogue and accommodation become once again worthwhile because local political decisions can and must be made. Free speech itself can again matter because it can be effective speech.

Moving Experiences

Reflections of a Veteran Itinerant

Dot Nuechterlein

Far be it from me to brag, but I am about to launch into a topic about which I am probably one of our era's living experts. If you are planning to move and wish to hire a consultant on boxing and crating your household goods, I'm your man—er, I mean person.

There are indeed some people who have moved more often than I have, but they cannot really qualify as advice-givers. One class of vagabonds consists of the down-and-outers. For instance, some of my probation-and-parole clients a few years back changed addresses nearly as frequently as a socialite changes clothes; however, they seldom had much bag and baggage to tote along, especially those who lit out of town. The idea was to leave no tracks, so that weary creditors and bad checks could not follow, and that required travelling light. On the other hand, the poor but honest folks I've known often have had precious few (or few precious) worldly goods to accompany their constant search for livable low-rentals.

The other habitual itinerants common in our society are those persons attached to the armed forces or large corporations. Now they could tell us heaps about putting down fresh roots and making social-psychological adjustments to new communities. But the process of packing and moving? No way. Happily for them the pain is usually eased by the fact that the boss hires someone else to do the dirty work. We've all heard tales of old rags and near-empty paint cans turning up at the new location because the packers and movers had been ordered to take "everything."

No, I am one of the few who has packed up whole housefuls more times than I care to remember, including twice this past summer: once across town and the other across the border. To be honest, we nearly always hire honest-to-goodness professionals to get the goods from one spot to the other. Years ago we had so much agony getting a U-Haul into Canada that we never tried it again. This summer, thanks to the generalmanship of my long-suffering brother, we did the two-mile cross-town move by trailer, but sad to say some ill effects are yet with us. Dear husband still occasionally rolls down the car window and screams "Fool" at other poor souls trying to save a buck by breaking their backs.

Dot Nuechterlein *teaches Sociology at Valparaiso University and is a regular contributor to* The Cresset.

But I am referring to the actual getting of the stuff into appropriate containers and making sure it arrives at our destination in the same number of pieces with which we started. That's the part I'm good at. Honestly! In the 8-10 household moves I have handled, taking tons of junk hundreds of miles, not one thing has ever been broken, squashed, dented, or otherwise mutilated. (Scratches don't count—one cannot protect against the real specialty of those bright boys the van lines always seem to find for the job.) In fact, the only casualty ever suffered was once when I wasn't quite finished enough (normally the movers are clearing out the first rooms while I am boxing the last) and a company packer came in to do a couple of lamps and mirrors. One lampshade caved in and had to be pitched out, plus they lost a mirror. But I myself am batting 1.000.

How can you duplicate this marvelous feat? Well, for starters it helps to spend years as a jigsaw puzzle addict. Also it is excellent training to apprentice under a father who could get two weeks vacation worth of possessions for self, wife, and six kids into one middling-size car trunk. But the real techniques can be learned through practice even by those less privileged in their origins. Assuming you can assemble a large number of containers of various proportions, there are just two simple strategies to master: Proper Place (as in "everything fits in its proper place") and Chinese Boxes. The former reduces the risk of damage to near zero, while the latter accounts for the bundles of money you save by going it alone.

Proper Place emphasizes the opposite of what you might think: objects fit into spots not necessarily by their type, but rather by shape and size. Things break because they rattle around bumping into other things, so you must fill each box until its contents cannot shift around in transit. The company man accomplishes this by filling all the empty spaces with paper, but the Proper Placer assumes that among the contents of the household there must be items of exactly the right proportions to fit just so—items which have to go along anyway.

For example, when packing a box of pots and pans, the heaviest, most awkward pieces naturally would go on the bottom, surrounded by lighter things. Then you fill in the nooks and crannies with anything else which fits, no matter if it has little or lots to do with the kitchen. Why use paper when a deck of cards or a toy or a pair of boots inside a plastic bag will do as well? Or, if something *must* be wrapped (china, paintings, etc.),

there are sheets, towels, blankets, or underwear just begging to play a meaningful role.

Of course you must realize that this method produces rather adventuresome unpacking; the label on the outside of the box may guide you in determining most of its contents, but not all those little extras that get thrown in for ballast. Be philosophical about it—moving is a nightmare anyway, so you may as well build in some eureka moments, those fun surprises when you discover that the gizmo for the pressure cooker or the blocks of wood that hold the big bookcase together are not lost, after all. (*Note:* There is a hidden blessing in moving often; some of your necessities never get unpacked, which (a) shows you they aren't all that necessary and (b) saves you the trouble of packing them the next time.)

Moving is never lots of laughs, but Chinese Boxes at least allows one to exercise some creativity. The principle here is to avoid moving empty space. Desk and bureau drawers stay full, with layers of odd-shaped or fragile items between the shirts and socks. Clothes hampers carry out-of-season garments or a bunch of pillows cushioning the iron and the cuckoo clock, the garbage can gets garden tools or the volleyball and net. (Ever try to dispose of an old beat-up trash can, by the way? Impossible—the sanitation workers never believe you mean it.) Wastepaper baskets nestle inside one another, the innermost being upside down and holding plastic flowerpots. The plastic pitcher lying in a box may as well carry a vase or measuring cups in its depths. I am rather careful with my few special treasures, such as the giraffe figurines which get tissue paper swaddlings and ride in the car rather than the van. But even the crystal survives Chinese Boxes treatment: each section of a partitioned liquor-store box gets a large plastic tumbler, which contains a wine glass, which is topped with kitchen towels and pot holders. You end up saving money, lots of it, because you use many fewer cartons than the pros, who wrap each bit individually and charge for the boxes besides.

The observant reader will have noticed that throughout this narrative the predominant pronoun has been the first person singular. I do hate to act the martyr, but it is a fact that I get very little help with this sort of enterprise. Being the literary type, my better half packs a mean box of books, and we're talking 70-80 boxes in our combined libraries. He has also claimed through the years that it is essential that he buy quantities of both books and booze, to keep on the good side of the proprietors against the day when the mad hunt is on for more cartons. It must work, because he does turn up with lots of them.

But that's about it. The truth is, he hates jigsaw puzzles. When we get to the point in which every room in the house is half-finished and all of these nearly full containers are gaping open while I traipse around holding several left-over articles which must have a Proper Place somewhere—well, frankly, he can't stand it. I get intent and uncommunicative and he stands there wondering what on earth to do and nobody has had enough sleep and the van arrives too soon and we consider marital separation. Meanwhile, small children pull out what is freshly packed while larger siblings, having boxed up their most precious possessions, stand around complaining bitterly about mother's decision to send some of their lesser loves to either the Goodwill or the city dump. No, I long ago found that the better way is to ship everybody off to Grandma's or Aunt Shirley's, turn up the stereo, take the phone off the hook, and brave it alone.

As mentioned above, I am available for freelance advising. Am also considering a book, but fear that I cannot get to it fast enough. You see, it is imperative that I share this valuable expertise immediately, as my abilities will atrophy soon. Oh, someday I will help the young ones pack for college, and there is the occasional challenge of vacation trips when I get to do both luggage and car trunk. Weekly I practice getting more into a grocery cart than anyone else around. But move a whole household? Like the sports champ who wants to hang up his gear while he's still on top, I plan to retire from active participation. My voice has now joined the mighty chorus of countless others who vow: "Me move? Never again."

Death

Is death an open window
where souls escape from cloistered rooms,
or just another dead end street
paved with pessimism?

who can say what mysteries might be unveiled
in God's expanding mind,
or whether only rotting carbon atoms
will stink up that abandoned lane?

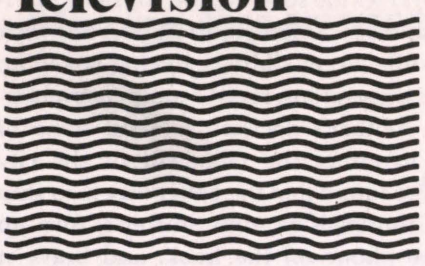
won't someone scrape away my frosty pane,
or is it meant to be forever translucent
reflecting back only what we want to see?

or can't someone drive past that foreboding sign,
reconnoiter the last few walled feet, dispel our hopes,
and Stoically report back again?

why is it so hard for science to penetrate
this first and last frontier?
or hasn't Newton or Einstein
developed the ultimate equation,
explaining life both here and hereafter?

Ken Bazyn

Television



TV does not dominate English life as it does American life, and that makes all the difference.

No *Mass* Media, Please, We're British!

Six Charms Of English TV

Richard Lee

"You liked Cambridge, didn't you?"
"Yes, didn't you?"
"It's all a con, sonny. This whole country is a con. But there are still some pickings. The box is the thing. . . . In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed monster is king."

Actually, television in England is hardly the one-eyed monster it's alleged to be in the dialogue above between two cynical Cantabrigians in Frederic Raphael's novel *The Glittering Prizes.* Rather, English TV is more like the watchful eye of an old nanny. And like a good and faithful nanny, English TV is cosy, properly pedagogical, a good story-teller, ever resourceful, occasionally dotty, and perhaps amusing to the family, but hardly an ogre or tyrant. The box in England simply does not dominate English life as television dominates American life, and therein lies at least six of the charms of English television.

The first charm of English TV is that it is free to be a very *small* mass medium. In comparison to American TV there is obviously less of it (three channels) for fewer viewers (potentially 50 million) during fewer hours each day across a tight little island about the size of Michigan. But the *smallness* of English TV as a mass medium is more precisely defined by its place in relation to other English media. England, unlike America, preserves excellent radio programming (including splendid radio drama and the superb BBC news), plentiful newspapers (including many lurid tabloids purveying sex and violence as in the days of Queen Victoria), and many lively theatre, opera, dance, mime, and music performances as well as community bookshops and small magazines. Not even "Attila the Hen," as the media sometimes depict Margaret Thatcher, dares cut too deeply into the national budget for the arts and entertainments.

Therefore English TV does not bear the burden of being the chief source of information, the arts, and entertainment for the English, a burden borne by American TV for most Americans. The English preserve a far wider "media mix" in their society than do Americans, and thus English TV is free to be a small mass medium balanced and supplemented by many other vigorous media. Television does not need to please everyone when there are plenty of easily available alternatives to it. Further, many Englishmen remain in touch with live theatre, live sports, and live music as well as much personal sociability. One is probably as likely to find an English family at a pub on an evening as home by the glow of the tube.

The second charm of English TV is its utterly natural, Cromwellian warts-and-all quality. It is not a glamorous medium as fixated on youth, consumption, and success as American TV. Celebrities on English TV are few, and indeed the whole notion of celebrity seems foreign to English society—unless the queen and the royal family could be said to function as celerities. At least there is little of that American kind of free-floating celebrity where one is "well known for being well known" and can as easily entertain, endorse a product, and run for public office. Rather, English TV performers can look like they were called up from the civil service or a Dickens' novel, and they are as likely to be elderly and homey as "the young and the beautiful." The performers often dress casually, wear a minimum of make-up, and apparently leave their blow-dryers at home. Many of the programs are live rather than videotaped, and with the exception of the lavish rock music fantasies, one almost always feels he is immediately in touch with real people. This naturalness of English TV is initially unnerving for an American viewer, used as he may be to TV as a more glossy medium for his private fantasies or for cheery public morale complete with laugh-tracks. English TV is wool where American TV is polyester.

English TV is particularly matter-of-fact and down-to-earch in the morning hours when it's given over almost wholly to its commendable Open University broadcasting. Even later in the day English TV remains relentlessly pedagogical with lots of self-help shows hosted by neighborly "talking-heads" who chat helpfully about, say, gardening, landscape painting, the joys of brassrubbing, and the care of pets. When the children come home from school there are delightful quiz programs especially for them, puppet shows, call-in happy birthday parties, sing-alongs, coaching for sports of all kinds, and excellent dramas treating the world of children intelligently. By tea-time English TV seems especially like leaning over the hedgerow for a leisurely visit with your semi-detached neighbor.

Associate Professor of Humanities in Christ College of Valparaiso University, Richard Lee *is presently directing the University's Overseas Study Center in Cambridge, England. Among his other distinctions, he is former editor of* The Cresset.

England provides proof that Christian values can be perpetuated culturally without stirring up a great deal of Christian belief by mass media evangelizing.

Indeed, an American tuning in to English TV almost any time day or night might feel he has blundered into an English country garden. The programs are laid out colorfully in irregular lengths, seldom formally on the hour or a regular fraction of it, and they topically meander through the day and into the night more like a growth of nature than the handiwork of man. A program runs as long as it needs to and stops, or if it needs more time it takes the time and pushes the next program ahead—or sometimes compresses it. In the garden of English television programming, the rue is sometimes mixed with the spurge, the tickweed with the thyme, and if the madwort occasionally seems likely to overgrow the hellbore the whole of the garden nevertheless has a pleasant air.

Contrarily, American TV seems more mechanically manufactured, each program factory cut to fit 30, 60, and 90 minute plastically-sealed segments. American TV programming always knows where the majority of the audience is and aims right at it. English TV programming has to be sought out individually and at leisure on a winding path with many surprises. The different TV programming formats nicely reflect the different values of the two societies, for English TV is primarily interested in personal communication of the arts and information and American TV is primarily in the business of making a mass popular culture available for profitable advertising. The different TV formats also probably reflect the different emphases each society places upon democracy, Americans tending to stress democracy as majority rule and the English tending to stress democracy as an equal voice for all.

Which leads me to the third charm of English TV, namely that it is not an overtly ideological medium. First, it is a refreshingly secular but not secularist medium. Religious broadcasting is almost non-existent save for programs like *Your Favorite Hymn,* a *Day One* religious news program, and an occasional homily from the vicar's study at the end of the broadcast day. But there is nothing remotely like an "electronic church" in England, for Christianity in England is so much a part of the English tradition that Christianity and the English tradition cannot be readily separated for TV programming. Insofar as the English tradition carries Christian values it seems to do so, as far as I can see, without massive infusions of Christian faith. Certainly England is proof that Christian values can be perpetuated culturally without stirring up a great deal of Christian belief by mass media evangelizing. That seems to this viewer best both for the church and for television and makes England seem indeed an "other Eden, demi-paradise."

English television rather resembles an English country garden.

English TV is also free of patriotic celebrations. (The royal wedding last summer was a rare exception.) The queen herself only rarely appears on TV, and then never in close-up, thus preserving the royal mystique, and even members of her family are usually photographed in medium or long shots when they make their more frequent appearances as news items. Nevertheless, the institution of the monarchy seems to hover over English TV and apparently frees English politicians from the task of parading England's patriotic symbols. Certainly political party conferences and political speeches on TV are remarkably without patriotic symbols in sight or sound, thus helpfully separating political issues from broad nationalistic appeals. If, say, the flag appears at all, it seems more a decoration than a symbol, and regional loyalties in England seem more heartily celebrated than any national loyalty. For an American visitor in England, dinner might begin with toasts exchanged "to the Queen" and "to the Constitution of the United States," and one is reminded again that patriotism is kept for celebration in personal relations and not by the mass media.

Most charming of all is English TV's freedom from the ideology of capitalism. Obviously the commercial-free channels are lacking those 20-second celebrations of the good life centered upon consumer goods, but even the commercial TV channel usually places its commercials at the end of the programs where they do not violate their integrity. Even there, English TV commercials are more wittily and winsomely designed to sell a simple product and not a whole way of life.[1] But more importantly from an ideological perspective, English TV is not fundamentally a capitalist advertising medium and therefore does not need to be programmed so exclusively toward those masses of viewers with the most buying power. This immense freedom allows a kind of programming adventuresomeness and creativity—chiefly represented by England's superb documentary film tradition now thriving on TV and its serial dramatizations of literary classics—which Americans usually cannot buy at any price.[2]

[1] An English TV license costs about $6.00 a month, probably less than half what most Americans pay for commercial free TV by cable.

[2] For example, in England we are currently enjoying the serialization of *Brideshead Revisited,* soon to be exported to the States. Americans should try to imagine such a program as fairly routine TV fare, and students of media might note there how adroitly English TV combines the freedom and mobility of cinema with the verbal richness and intimacy of theatre.

The television interview programs well reflect the characteristic English trait of understatement concerning serious matters and mock outrage over minor irritations.

English TV here reflects the English approach to public life generally, namely, first the English decide what kind of society they want and then seek to fund it—with more or less success. I think it would not occur to most Englishmen to let loose capitalist economic forces and then let an "invisible hand" decide the quality of their public life as well as the marketing of their goods. In many paradoxical ways traditional England is a more experimenting society than the United States, though it remains to be seen whether England can preserve a healthy capitalist economy without sustaining it by means of the predations of capitalist culture. For the time being one can watch English TV without feeling he is an advertiser's target or that the purpose of life is to compete and consume. Certainly the English have a freer TV medium largely under government control than Americans have with their TV largely under corporate commercial control.

Which leads me to the fourth charm of English television, namely its dispassionate yet committed treatment of political issues and its steady development of a political culture through its pervasive documentary programming—as well as its straight news reporting at sufficient length to make current political choices clear. Here it is well to remind American readers that, unlike their own political spectrum which runs substantially from the center to the right, the English political spectrum is both wider to the right and left and probably more extreme at both ends of the spectrum. American politics has neither the equivalent of Michael Foot or Enoch Powell, much less Tony Benn or Ian Paisley. American readers may also need to reflect upon the paradox that their highly mobile and protean society tends to produce great social and political conformity while the more ritually bound and stratified society of England tends to produce more individuality, even eccentricity. The wider political spectrum in England and in neighboring Europe requires English TV to find ways to handle controversy regularly, civilly, and fairly, and this is nobly attempted and often admirably achieved by a remarkable number of interview programs with what often amounts to an adversary format. By comparison, American TV interviewers are deferential to the point of docility.

English television offers political candor and clarity, and is refreshingly free of U.S. TV's combination of prudery and prurience.

The TV interview programs well reflect the characteristic English trait of understatement concerning serious matters and mock outrage over minor irritations, and almost all the speakers to the issues prove the dictum that "The English think as they speak while Americans speak as they think." Even the interviewed "man in the street" speaks not phrases but paragraphs. TV programs of "talking-heads" are easy to take when the speakers really talk from their heads, and it is especially refreshing to hear politicians and public officials speak without the gaffes, disinformation, evasions, public relations, and demagoguery characteristic of American TV political discourse. Americans and the English are not so much "separated by a common language" as Shaw or Wilde quipped as they are separated by the different purposes to which they put their common language. Americans tend to use their language to "sell" and "win friends and influence people" while the English tend to use their language to "think" and "reach the next compromise." Here one needs only to compare Ronald Reagan with Margaret Thatcher as TV personae.

Of course, none of the precision, lucidity, and nuance of English public discourse makes any of England's political choices easier, and for all their alleged empiricism the English do not always learn from their experience, but at least English TV could help them know why they are wrong when they are not right. English political broadcasting, ably representing both the English sense of "fair play" and the English love of hard-fought games, provides a remarkable format for furthering England's knowledge of itself and the wider world. This is all to the good, for the English have harder political choices to make and much less margin for error than their vastly wealthier American cousins.

A fifth charm of English TV is related to its political candor and clarity, namely its freedom from both prudery and prurience. English society generally is neither as informed nor deformed by the Puritan ethic as is America, and its resulting freedom from both censoriousness and lasciviousness is wholesomely evident in its television. Programs can be sexually candid without salacious innuendo, nudity can occur without sophomoric leering, and characters in dramas can use the vivid and bawdy language of real people. It should be noted, however, that British English, especially in its widely ranging regional expressions so richly heard on unhomogeneous English TV, has many more ways and words for expressing strong feeling without being profane than does American English. Indeed, some of the ways and words on English TV were not even dreamt of by Shakespeare.

Perhaps more troubling to an American moral majoritarian would be the larky irreverence toward authority on English TV and its forthright presentation of controversial issues, sometimes in comic perspective. I recently tried to imagine Jerry Falwell's reaction to a

The task of interpreting American TV to the English becomes a sticky wicket when a majority of the American TV imports are a strange lot even by American standards.

Your Favorite Hymn program when a young laywoman was interviewed at her work with younger girls in a birth control clinic where she modestly felt she was "only doing her Christian service" and then delightfully chose as her favorite hymn "O, Love That Will Not Let Me Go"! Nor, I think, would Reverend Falwell approve, were it possible, an American equivalent of the English program *A Kick Up the Eighties* or many of the anti-ecclesiastical antics of *Bless Me, Father* or *The Stanley Baxter Show.* The latter program, like many other English comedy shows, would be under further Falwellian suspicion for its frequent use of male actors in drag, a traditional kind of English comedy which is probably untranslatable to American audiences inclined to homophobia. The English comedy shows recently exported to America—*The Two Ronnies, Morecambe and Wise, Monty Python,* and *Benny Hill*—are only faintly representative of this kind of English schoolboy comedy on English TV. The better this comedy, the more English it is, and thus the best of it will not export to American audiences.

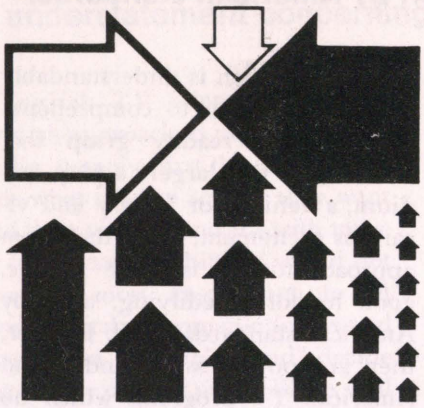
Which leads me to the final charm of English TV, and this charm depends upon an American watching it with English friends—and then having to try to explain the *American* programs to them. It goes well beyond trying to explain to the English why, say, Johnny Carson is funniest to American audiences when his jokes *don't* get a laugh or, upon seeing an old Ronald Reagan movie together, why it makes perfect sense to Americans to elect a failing but forceful show business personality to public office. The task of interpretation really becomes a sticky wicket when a majority of the American TV imports are a strange lot even by American standards.

At this writing in early December the more popular American programs on English TV are *Dallas, Vegas, Magnum, Flamingo Road,* and *Knot's Landing.* Taken together they are probably enough to strain the Anglo-American alliance to the point of complete English incomprehension of American society. These programs, especially when nestled next to the vastly contrasting English programs, often communicate a terrifying America of cynical corruption, vulgar consumption, reckless power, and vaulting passions without the slightest compassion. And, of course, there is the violence of American TV which seems more random, jaded, and sadistic in American programs when they run beside the more carefully pointed and restrained depictions of violence in English programs. It is little wonder that the ordinary Englishman could fear that the US might casually launch a nuclear "Shoot-Out in the UK Corral" with the USSR. And, I suspect, it would be difficult for many Englishmen to believe that the average American never hears a gun discharged in anger and that a night in south Chicago might be safer than a day in Belfast.

The trick of interpreting American TV to the English seems to turn on a distinction which is understandably difficult for them to comprehend. They cannot readily grasp that American TV is largely a play medium, a vehicle for fantasy and vicarious excitement, when their own approach to TV is more prosaic, good humored, edifying, and—by American standards—dull. Further, they are powerless to understand American TV programs which no more faithfully represent Americans to Americans than they represent Americans to the English, and I am often powerless to explain to them the Los Angeles fantasies of American society in American television. Perhaps most intractable to English understanding is the American role of TV as a lifelong environment more pervasive than family, union, school, work, or church—with programs which require little attention, thought, feeling, or action.[3] You see, to an Englishman that would be a kingdom of the blind where the one-eyed monster is king.

[3] My American students, for example, know almost no hymns, folk songs, or even the second verse of their national anthem by heart, but they can sing TV commercial jingles and TV program theme songs by the hour.

The Nation



The Kerner Commission report, if given close attention, might help us avoid the fire next time.

Forgetting What We Ought to Remember

The Neglected Kerner Commission Report Still Should Speak to Us

Karl E. Lutze

Among the adjectives invoked in anticipating what will be happening in the decade before us are ominous, awesome, and perilous. While some have countered that we should speak of "The *Exciting* 80s," declaring this to be a time for optimism and hope, realism suggests caution, wisdom, and courage as the attributes required.

For, in fact, our problems are great. Unemployment is taking on epidemic proportions. The shutting down of businesses, small and large, is alarming. Courts find it difficult to keep up with the volume of bankruptcy cases. The lines of refugees looking for a home get longer by the hour. The nervous tensions among the major world powers, the unpredictable demagoguery and the revolutionary responses within and among the developing countries, the frightening treacheries of the terrorists in so many places—all these give us cause to be a bit edgy as we wonder how the next years will unfold.

It is not a defeatist attitude to be prepared for the rainy day. Historical memory should remind us of the evils that attend each generation and of our not always adequate response to those evils.

While we can still remember the day of the soup kitchens and the bread-lines of the 30s, and while we may recall the black-outs of the 40s as the citizenry rehearsed procedures for response to aerial attacks, we may have forgotten the more recent horror story of the 60s—when the tanks rumbled in the streets and the national guard marched among the burning buildings to the smell of smoke and tear gas, and to the sound of sirens and gun shots and broken glass. It is not at all clear that we learned from that horror story what we ought to have learned.

In 1968 Bantam books issued a paperback called *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.* Its subtitle read: "U.S. Riot Commission Report—What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done?"

In 32 pages of sobering graphic photographs and 282 pages of detailed description, the special, so-called "Kerner Commission" spelled out what had happened in the racial clashes that exploded in the summer of 1967 in Tampa, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Newark, Plainfield, New Brunswick, and Detroit.

The report did a post-mortem on what happened in those disasters and presented a careful analysis of the factors that culminated in these terrifying outbursts. The overall picture presented is ugly and painful to recall.

Then in eight additional chapters covering 200 more pages the commission read off its long list of recommendations for remedial changes that would help avoid any repetition of those agonizing pages of U.S. history.

The publication enjoyed immediate success and its widespread distribution followed discussion of its content in news releases, editorials, magazine articles, and talk show dialogue on radio and television.

But as happens with best-sellers, the *Report* found its way to the shelves and remote corners (in many cases, not even read—often barely perused) to gather dust and cobwebs. Today, few remember it; and even fewer remember its message.

The *Report* focused on the following factors that surfaced in the Commission's studies, factors that helped precipitate the disruptions:

1) the *high unemployment* that characterized black communities. Among 16 to 19 year old non-white employable males at that time, the percentage of jobless was estimated at 26.5 per cent.
2) the *undereducated status* that marks so many residents of non-white communities. The commission cited as major factors in generating the turbulence both the presence of persons who had not completed high school educations, and the inability of many non-whites to compete in the job market and the consequent loss of self-esteem, both of which contribute so heavily to fragmented family life.
3) the many manifestations of *poverty* among children, aging, unemployed, and underemployed, conditions that foster discontent, hopelessness, and anger.
4) the problem of *substandard, unsafe, overpriced, and overcrowded housing* that marked the ghetto communities of 1967.

Among the means proposed by

Karl E. Lutze, *who contributes frequently to* The Cresset *on political affairs, is Director for Church Relations and Associate Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University. He earlier served for 12 years as Executive Director of the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America.*

Most of the proposals made in 1968 to eliminate the conditions that generated the frightening disorders in our large cities have been ignored or discarded.

the commission for dealing with the problem areas were these:

1) to attack *unemployment,* the commission recommended job training programs and development of new jobs in public and private job structures;
2) to deal with the relatively *low educational levels* achieved in minority neighborhoods, the report called for tutoring programs, compensatory arrangements for those whose earlier educational needs had been neglected, and for expanded scholarship subsidies;
3) to remedy the *poverty* situation that plagues the congested areas of our cities, the commission called for assuring "a decent level of existence" on the basis of uniform national standards as well as creating new work incentives and eliminating features in the welfare system that foster hardship and dependence; and
4) to correct the reality of *unsafe, inadequate, and overpriced housing,* the commissioners proposed that 6,000,000 units of new low- and moderate- income housing be provided between 1968 and 1973, that an "expanded and modified below-market" interest rate program be installed, and that a rent as well as an owner supplement program be instituted.

The scoreboard on follow-through shows that the government (and the public that elected the current administration) regards job-training programs as an extravagance that the country cannot afford. Meanwhile unemployment is reaching beyond the high plateau of this November's 8 per cent, and it is estimated that unemployment among black employable men between ages 16 and 19 in some of our larger cities presently exceeds 65 per cent.

Similarly, the belt-tightening program embraced by the present administration has cut sharply into government support for educational assistance to people in poor neighborhoods. The slashes eliminate programs intended to compensate for neglected or inferior education among lower-grade-level children. Young men and women who might otherwise pursue a college education now find themselves without adequate scholarship help. The cutbacks almost assure the intensifying of the problems these people have already been experiencing.

This same austerity move cuts deeply into any existing plans for freeing people up for self-support through provision of day care centers or providing other kinds of relief to the people whose few dollars simply will not stretch farther.

Almost immediately after the Kerner Commission released its recommendations, the cutdown on residential construction—particularly for low-income housing—went into effect and the inordinately high interest rates made new home building and purchase impossible even for most middle-class people. Thus houses that would ordinarily have become available simply were never even put up for sale.

All of this means that most of the proposals made in 1968 to eliminate or correct those conditions that seem to have generated the frightening and devastating disorders in our large cities have been ignored or discarded. And that means that the volatile situation of 1967 is not only still with us, but if anything, things have worsened. We can hardly content ourselves with claiming that "riots don't work" or assuming that we now have appropriate weapons and well-trained personnel who with sophisticated techniques and heavy force can trample and suppress any expression of anger or demonstration of protest.

Most of the riots, as they've been called, occurred in past years on the torrid days and humid nights of a hot summer. True, this coming summer may pass quietly and uneventfully by. But riots or not, the plight of the poor deserves our nation's attention.

When the *Kerner Report* was first released, Doctor Clemonce Sabourin, the pastor of Mount Zion Lutheran Church in New York's Harlem, commented, "I quickly perused the *Report* to see whether the churches would be censured as contributors to the situation that caused the disorders. I admit that at first I was relieved to note that 'we' weren't singled out for our failures; and then the realization suddenly struck me that an even worse judgment had been pronounced. The churches weren't even mentioned! 'We' were virtually ignored. The *Report* didn't even recognize the churches as being in any way significant or as having even the slightest relevance in the whole matter!"

Pastor Sabourin did, however, point to one important statement made by the commission in its summation and suggested—already back in 1968—that "herein lies the challenge to the Christian community":

> The need is not so much for the government to design new programs as it is for the nation to generate new will.
>
> Private enterprise, labor unions, *the churches* [emphasis ours], the universities—all our urban institutions—must deepen their involvement in the life of the city and their commitment to its revival and welfare.

When is the last time we've talked about this in our churches? Can the churches still become advocates for the poor and a voice of creative and resourceful support to leaders in government, in institutions, and in their respective communities, not merely to prevent those destructive holocausts in the big cities, but to be the faithful champions of the poor and witnesses to a life-giving, loving Lord that our God expects us to be—and enables us to be?

Theatre

Critics who regularly savage the theatre and yet call for its revival might examine themselves.

Who Needs Criticism?

Good Theatre Requires Discerning and Sympathetic Critics

John Steven Paul

In a fall issue of *The New Republic,* the journal's regular theatre columnist Robert Brustein asked rhetorically, "Who needs theatre?" He answered himself, not surprisingly, "We all do." The remainder of his essay constituted an eloquent and solemn expression of hope for the survival of a theatre in America that "signifies [the] community we have forsaken, the accidents and risks we would rather avoid, the sweat and gristle we prefer to disguise, the labor of humans working against odds."

One feels moved to respond to this essay partly out of an impulse to remark upon the remarkable. This *is,* after all, the same Robert Brustein the thrust of whose theatre commentary is usually that persons who pay to see what he perceives as the banality of contemporary theatrical fare are beneath contempt. This *is* the Robert Brustein who yawns when an American theatre ventures to enact a middle-class story realistically and sneers when a theatre attempts to create new forms for the presentation of old truths. Such a fervent expression of hope for the future of these ventures and attempts from this bi-weekly yawner and sneerer seems incongruous. Incongruity is always remarkable and even amusing.

Not that one takes issue with Mr. Brustein's right and responsibility as a theatre writer to name mediocrity "mediocre." No intelligent reader—no matter the depth of his concern for the future of live theatre—is satisfied by the enthusiasm of a booster, a publicist in the guise of a critic, a sheep in wolf's clothing. Still it is troubling to read the continuing condemnations of theatrical ventures and attempts from a writer so thoroughly informed by training, scholarship, and experience in front of and behind the curtain.

On one level, it is simply annoying that *The New Republic,* a journal with wide circulation in the nation's intellectual community, implies that New York City theatre is *theatre.* Further, not even all New York City theatre is *theatre;* rather *theatre* is Broadway, the established off-Broadway companies, and, occasionally, a major regional theatre. This implication stems from Robert Brustein's extremely narrow journalistic territory. Obviously, no one person could adequately cover the national theatre scene, but this fact does not alter the unfortunate implication.

The consequences of a theatre columnist's published opinions—especially negative opinions—for particular theatre companies can be far more serious than a mere annoyance. Arguably, it is within the power of a respected theatre critic to drown the roots of a sprouting venture and singe the wings of a fledgling attempt. The existence of such power in a theatre critic's pen has been debated *ad nauseam.* Assuming that the power does exist, it seems that its source is the complex relationship among the theatre, its audience, and the critic.

The theatre is the most fragile of today's art forms. It is a complicated and expensive undertaking, depending on the contributions of a relatively large number of specialized artists and practitioners as well as on adequate facilities, equipment, and materials. All these items must be paid for, usually by ticket purchasers. The theatre needs its audience to survive.

The audience does not need the theatre to survive: no *perceived* symbiotic relationship here. The typical pair of potential theatre patrons has many alternatives for diversion, including television and the movies. Of those alternatives, the theatre requires the greatest investment (perhaps "risk" is the better word) of time, energy, effort, and money. There is no need to rehearse the requisite steps that precede the downsitting in a theatre auditorium. Suffice it to say that unless the pair lives in one of five or six large cities, its first step is to travel *to* one of those cities.

The respected theatre critic's disapprobation confronts the pair of patrons as not the first and sufficient discouragement, but as yet another and perhaps the final discouragement to attending a live theatre production. "Well," he says, absent-mindedly flipping through the *TV Guide,* "the *Post* called that show a disaster from casting to curtain call, honey. Maybe we should go to the movies."

Television and film criticism would not seem to have that kind of immediate impact on the success of their subjects. Television and film drama have large, diversified audiences that continue to elect these forms of entertainment despite the occasional negative comment on a

John Steven Paul *recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is a stage director and teacher of dramatic literature at Valparaiso University. He is a frequent contributor to* The Cresset.

It must be difficult, even painful, for a critic to know that a well-fashioned verbal assault upon a theatrical product might well prove a fatal insult.

specific work. Why? Partly because the average television viewer risks little in the way of time, energy, effort, and money by tuning in a television program; the moviegoer risks little more in traveling to his neighborhood shopping center to view a film. One suspects that relatively few people avoid a television program because of a critic's condemnation.

We have now arrived at the central dilemma for the theatre writer who relishes his subject, believes the theatre to be an absolutely necessary component of a healthy society, and cares deeply about the present and future course of the live theatre. How does such a writer, cognizant of his power, write seriously, honestly, and supportively about a theatre 1) which because of its nature as an art performed live by human beings is as likely to be imperfect on a particular evening as it is to be perfect; 2) which because of the uneven geographical distribution of artistic talent is likely, in many locations, to seem amateurish in comparison with centrally produced and broadcast television and film productions; and 3) which tends to be measured against traditions of dramatic and theatrical excellence which reach back to the beginnings of recorded cultural history, as well as against the highest quality theatrical ventures around the world. (For example: is it fair to measure the work of Chicago's "off-loop" theatres against the Royal Shakespeare Company's Nicholas Nickleby, imported from London?)

This dilemma, one presumes, would be especially acute for a writer with Robert Brustein's stance: with a producer-director's foot in the academic theatre (late of Yale, now at Harvard) and a critic's foot in the professional theatre. The university theatre specialist is committed to inspiring, generating, and developing new theatre: new plays and new productions of old plays. In theatres allied with educational institutions it is the *process* of theatre production that is pre-eminent; the educator-director instructs and confirms, criticizes and encourages, chastens and rewards student-artists engaged in the process of producing theatre art. The educator invites an audience to view the results of this process, to preview theatre artists who may one day turn their knowledge and skills into vital theatre productions, to be present at the creation of new theatre. The educator's professional attention is focused upon the process, the theatre artists, the creation.

The professional theatre writer focuses not upon the creation, but on what has been created. The theatre artists are not his clients, those who *read* his felicitous phrases are. The critic's constituents are naturally more concerned with product rather than process. Potential audiences look to the writer to represent them in the audience, to aid them in making their decision to invest time, energy, effort, and money in this product. The objectivity born of the writer's detachment from the production process enables him to think and write critically of the product. Yet, for one so intimately involved on a daily basis with the process of producing theatre, writing about product as detached from process must be difficult. It must be still more difficult, even painful, to know that a well-fashioned verbal assault upon a theatrical product may prove a fatal insult to the promising if imperfect theatrical process that yielded the product. How many such insults serious theatre in America can survive is unknown.

Is it possible that theatre criticism might widen its focus to include some if not all of the process of production as well as the product? While the potential theatre audiences continue to be interested primarily in the product, might it not be possible to subtly educate them concerning the no-doubt mysterious chain of developments through which production has traveled? Rather than an immediate evaluation of the product, might the theatre critic not attempt to describe the context in which the production developed: a context comprised of objectives and goals which may have extended beyond the simple goal of a "hit show"? Could not a responsible theatre writer take care to answer the question "what were they trying to do?" before judging how well they did it?

It may well be that potential theatre audiences do not care to read about the process of creating theatre, but the critic's audience is actually a broader one than this group of cultural consumers. There is a segment of this audience which needs to be told specificially about process. That segment is the creators themselves. The directors, designers, actors, producers, stage managers, and technical people need critical response to not only what they have produced but how they have produced it. Such response from an informed, experienced, sophisticated critic is necessary if the theatre process is to operate in the daylight of the wider artistic, social, and cultural reality rather than in the darkness backstage.

Criticism or metacriticism is a cheerless subject. If live theatre is irrelevant to the majority of people in this country, theatre criticism is yet another step removed from their concern. This being so, it is time to write about the process of producing theatre like science writers writing about discoveries. If the theatre is to thrive in our society, theatre writers must write evaluatively, but also descriptively and persuasively. We all need theatre criticism to tell us who needs theatre and *why*.

Books

Four Theatres In Five Books

Review Essay

Arvid F. Sponberg

Post-War British Theatre Criticism

By John Elsom. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 270 pp. $25.00; $14.95 (paper).

The Strands Entwined: A New Direction in American Drama

By Samuel J. Bernstein. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 171 pp.

The Theatre Event: Modern Theories Of Performance

By Timothy J. Wiles. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 209 pp. $17.50.

Run-Through: A Memoir, 1902/1941

By John Houseman. New York: Simon & Schuster. 507 pp. $7.95 (paper).

Front & Center: A Memoir, 1942/1955

By John Houseman. New York: Simon & Schuster. 512 pp. $7.95 (paper).

Arvid F. Sponberg *is Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at Valparaiso University. He earned his B.A. at Augustana College (Illinois), his M.A. at the University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. He has a particular interest in modern British and American drama.*

It will be a fact of theatre history that the late twentieth century produced almost as many varieties of theatre as it did of religion. The books discussed here illustrate both that variety and the quality of current thinking about the theatre. Anyone seriously interested in the theatre, its history and future, ought to feel dismayed at the spectacle of these five books. They are all about the same thing and yet that thing manifests itself under different aspects, no one easily related to the others. With no sense of assurance, and strictly for convenience, I've given these aspects names, trying to apprehend something of each author's attitude toward his subject.

I. The Theatre as Scrapbook

John Elsom, theatre critic for *The Listener,* has compiled an anthology of excerpts from daily and weekly newspaper reviews published between 1944 (Olivier's *Richard III*) and 1978 (Pinter's *Betrayal*). Forty-seven performances of forty-five plays are reviewed. (There are three *Hamlets,* by Burton, Warner, and Kingsley.) These include nine Shakespearean productions, three American plays (*Streetcar, Guys and Dolls,* and *Long Day's Journey*), and six other non-British plays (*Oedipus, Godot, Brand, Marat/Sade, Misanthrope,* and *Three Sisters*). Of the remaining twenty-seven British plays, twenty-four were written during the period under scrutiny. Elsom has struck a rough balance among dramatic forms but only major playwrights, directors, theatres, and actors are noticed. He provides a brief general introduction to the craft of newspaper reviewing as well as informative "bridges" between sets of reviews.

The book enables the reader to gauge some of the reactions to major shifts in the theatrical life of London. Further, it provides the chance to read several reviews of a single performance. The differences among these responses—some broad, some subtle—constitute, I think, the reason for the book. In the end, though, the differences don't seem so important. Because of its arrangement, the book encourages dipping. It's just the book you need if you catch yourself thinking, I wonder what the reviewers for the London dailies thought about Rattigan's *Separate Tables.* Or, perhaps you've puzzled whether W. A. Darlington wrote with the same verve in 1967 as he did in 1944. Maybe your modern drama instructor has assigned you to do a paper on Pinter. This little gold mine of quotations will give your essay the patina of scholarship.

It is fun to read about famous performances. Olivier's later career gets loving attention. His playing of Oedipus and Mr. Puff on the same bill and his Othello sent the reviewers scrambling for their metaphors. The excitement survives in their columns. This kind of nostalgia has always been a major pleasure of theatre-going and Elsom indulges his readers in what has been an exciting era in British theatre.

Beyond nostalgia, however, Elsom's purposes are not clear. His interstitial commentary hardly constitutes history and he simply leaves out too much territory for us to take this as a serious survey of criticism. Moreover, I suspect that the sources for these excerpts are someone's scrapbooks. I hope that Elsom didn't plunk himself for long hours before a microfilm reader to find material which only reminds us again that daily theatre reviewing is an ephemeral profession. So much reviewing is reporting of who plays what and who directed whom. Even in small doses this soon becomes tedious. I found myself wishing for less about the players and more about the playwrights and the plays. Scene, lighting, and costume designers, as usual, rarely rate more than a mention.

Daily and weekly reviewers seldom have the leisure to educate the audience about the planning which conditions the performance. Elsom's commentary, by contrast, is welcome because it answers some questions which the reviews can't even raise. Finally, though, he leaves his sources, and us, in the shadows. A concluding chapter drawing out the

main themes of the period, a bibliography, and biographical sketches of the reviewers would have made this book a more fitting tribute to those faithful scribblers in the front rows.

II. The Theatre as Duet

Samuel J. Bernstein is interested in reviewers, too, but he also has a thesis: "In a few gifted writers . . . the mingling of two important strains in our national dramaturgy has resulted in a true and new harmony. These two strains are the realistic-naturalistic, the traditional dominant orientation of American drama, and the European absurdist." The gifted writers and their plays are David Rabe, *Sticks and Bones;* John Guare, *The House of Blue Leaves;* Ed Bullins, *The Taking of Miss Janie;* Robert Anderson, *Double Solitaire;* and Edward Albee, *Seascape.*

Each chapter treating a play is divided into three parts: "A Review of Criticism," "A Discussion," and "Entwining the Strands." "Criticism" means excerpts from the reviews of the first New York performances by the daily newspapers and some national weekly magazines. Bernstein notes the principal points of agreement and disagreement among the reviewers. The "discussion" sections take up some of these points in passing but for the most part they summarize action and dialog: "Then Nancy thinks she sees people farther up on the dunes. Since she cannot see them clearly, Charlie jests that she would be of little use if they went underwater together. She comments that she would depend on Charlie's protection; this notion causes them to compliment each other on the sharing they have enjoyed as lovers and as married people." There are pages and pages of this. In the "entwining" segments, Bernstein very briefly underscores which elements in the plays he finds realistic and which absurdist. Esslin, Fergusson, Krutch, et al. are applied with a broad brush.

The opening chapter of ten plays, "Modern American Drama: An Overview," asserts that the hallmarks of our drama have been diversity of experiment, especially in social protest plays, and optimism of a "stubborn," "tested" kind. In the concluding chapter, "The Strands Entwined," Bernstein states that the principal legacy of absurdism are the images of chaos which "inform all five models of current American drama discussed in the study." Informing Bernstein's book is the figure of Walter Kerr, whose views about the low ebb of American drama Bernstein tries to refute: "I see a new wave of American playwrights of high calibre . . . we have entered upon a new era of American playwriting. . . ." Bernstein's argument, then, is not merely that American playwrights have entwined realism and absurdism—which no one denies—but that as a result the drama of the seventies has given us "works that will do justice to the heritage left us by O'Neill."

The illusion/reality debate has been going in theatre since Ibsen.

The weakness of this argument is evident when we consider the one dramatic element most necessary to realistic drama and abjured by absurdists: character. Bernstein's summaries make it even harder to distinguish Albee's Charlie and Nancy from Anderson's Charlie and Barbara, and that quartet from Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice. Contrast Rabe's characters with O'Neill's and you see the essential failure which Kerr and others lament. The characters of the seventies lack authority. They moan and shriek at the audience but they cannot speak for them. (*Sticks and Bones* ". . . is a savage satire of middle-class shallowness, smugness, and spiritual deficiency . . ." etc.) Whereas Mary and James Tyrone remain haunting creations which challenge our best actors, Ozzie and Harriet are flickering images lacking the substance of great drama. We shouldn't blame Rabe for this. After all, he didn't create Ozzie and Harriet—Ozzie and Harriet did. But Bernstein's failure to appreciate this difference makes his hopes for a new era in American drama seem pallid.

III. The Theatre as Symposium

While Elsom tries to enlighten us about critics and Bernstein about playwrights, Timothy J. Wiles tries to bring some order to another important region of theatrical history—production. In his book, he takes up the ideas of four important theorists: Konstantin Stanislavski (*An Actor Prepares, My Life in Art*), Bertolt Brecht ("Short Organum for the Theatre"), Antonin Artaud (*The Theatre and Its Double*), and Jerzy Grotowski (*Towards a Poor Theatre*). Of these four, only Grotowski is still living but, together, they span the twentieth century. Their influence is wide; in the case of Stanislavski, nearly universal. Their writings are technical and Wiles' concern is to relate their ideas for the theatre to Aristotle's *Poetics* and to modern phenomenology.

The nature of theatre is such that it is almost impossible for an ordinary playgoer, during a performance, to distinguish among the contributions of the playwright, the actors, and the director. You could say that the success of a theatrical event depends on the skill of the play-makers to make what is a rickety contraption seem to be a streamlined whole. Since the time of Ibsen, therefore, the debate about the value of illusion and its relations to the representation of reality has grumbled onward. Above the general muttering, every thirty years or so, we hear a cry of a provisional verdict. Sometimes the authority—Stanislavski, for example—declares in favor of the illusion of reality; at another time, a Brecht announces for the reality of non-illusion. A chorus takes up the cry for a time but its members soon begin to dispute among themselves. After a while, their voices recede into the common chatter of the newsroom, the classroom, and the green room.

Every theorist, however, must speak to the illusion/reality question because in the theatre everything depends upon making the audience believe that something as contrived

as a performance is as natural as rain and as unexpected as manna. The theorists whom Wiles discusses expended much ink worrying about what to do with the many-headed beast which pays money to sit in uncomfortable positions and watch a sequence of events which is supposed to benefit them in some hard-to-define way.

As to this benefit, Wiles finds that all four directors—I beg your pardon, *metteurs-en-scene*—aim at a variety of catharsis. Entering, thus, with Aristotle on his arm, Wiles raises the level of discussion so that by the end of the book I was pretty sure that our four heroes would have felt at home in the lee of the Acropolis, if not actually on top of it. Wiles is careful to point out that what Aristotle's readers have thought catharsis means (the purification or purgation of emotions) isn't what Aristotle thought it meant: " a 'clarification' of the play's incidents reverses the more common notion that tragedy purges pity and fear from its hero or from its audience. . . . Nowhere in the *Poetics* does Aristotle specify the effect which dramatic literature ought to have on its audience." The theorists in question were avid mis-readers of Aristotle and their theories of performance specify in detail the effects a theatre event ought to have on actors and audience alike.

Stanislavski wanted to unite them: "[The actor] speaks in his own right as one placed in the circumstances created by the play. The thoughts, feelings, conceptions, reasoning of the author are transformed into his own. And it is not his sole purpose to render the lines so that they shall be *understood.* For him it is necessary that the spectators *feel* his own inner relationship to what he is saying. They must follow his own creative *will* and desires. Here the motive forces of his psychic life are united in action and interdependent." The desire to annihilate the distinction between actor and audience is intensified in Brecht who wished to "effect an understanding of social process" in actors and audience alike. Artaud carried the process another step and longed for a theatre which annihilated everything, including itself.

In one of the most bizarre conceptions of theatre ever articulated, Artaud tried to unite creation and destruction: "The theatre, like the plague . . . releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities, and if these possibilities and these powers are dark, it is not the fault of the plague nor of the theatre, but of life. . . . It appears that by means of the plague, a gigantic abscess, as much moral as social, has been created to drain abscesses collectively. . . . The theatre like the plague is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure. And the plague is a superior disease because it is a total crisis after which nothing remains except death or an extreme purification."

Artaud's bizarre view: theatre, like the plague, is a crisis resolved by death or by cure.

Grotwoski, Wiles says, doesn't mind audiences as long as they're of the right sort: "When he limits his audience size to thirty spectators, he does this partially to acknowledge that only a very responsible, emotionally and intellectually knowledgeable, and necessarily small number of people may legitimately take part in such a project as his; he calls this group of initiates 'an elite of the soul,' as opposed to a monied or educated elite, the two usual audiences for theatre."

The need for this sort of audience may explain why Grotowski's laboratory theatre hasn't staged any new productions since 1968. His remarks about this hiatus indicate that for him, the need to perform has been replaced by a different need: "I cannot say 'I love the theatre' as many do. I don't love the theatre. It is just a domain, just a place, just an occasion whereby we encounter other people and through which we perform an act of love." And on another occasion, referring to his company of actors: "Now we are on holiday; our relationship among one another is explored without reference to texts or legends."

Wiles does ample justice to these four. He is a careful scholar and the earnestness of his labor is apparent in every paragraph. By the end, though, I couldn't help feeling that what looked like the main road of theatrical development in this century had reached a dead end. Without texts, or audience, it would appear that Grotowski has accomplished what Artaud only dreamed about, the transformation of the theatre into an ideal space, the potential of which is more significant than its use. Grotowski, it turns out, doesn't want a theatre, he wants a refuge.

IV. The Theatre as Refuge

The desire to find a life in art, or to find one's life through art, is something which John Houseman understands. He differs from Grotowski, however, in that the presence of an audience—and one of the monied and educated sort—was required to assure him that his future lay in the theatre. John Houseman was born in Europe in 1902. A lonely, fear-stricken childhood in England and France followed by a feckless career in the international grain-trading business led, with no particular logic, to a friendship with the composer, Virgil Thompson, and the responsibility for producing, in 1934, an opera titled *Four Saints in Three Acts.*

In *Run-Through,* the first volume of his autobiography, Houseman describes his reaction to the audience on opening night: "And as the crimson curtain fell . . . I heard for the first time in my life that most wonderful of all backstage sounds—the brief, terrifying silence followed by the sudden crash of applause from a huge, invisible audience, breaking in great waves against the velvet wall behind which it could be heard beating like an angry, insistent flood. When the curtain finally rose again it was as though a dam had burst. With a triumphant roar, through which I could vaguely distinguish the sharper tones of cheers

and bravos, it came rushing at us out of the darkness, sweeping over the bright-lit stage, overwhelming the small, solemnly bowing figures of our astounded saints. . . . Flowers were handed up in the best operatic tradition as bow followed bow. Still, the audience refused to budge, and we went on bowing and smiling as wave after wave of sound swept over us and the sweating stagehands, like demented bell ringers, hauled away at their ropes, sending the huge curtain up and down, up and down till, finally, in sheer exhaustion, they stopped and the audience slowly evacuated the theatre. And when it was all over and the Saints had gone off to their dressing rooms and the crew had cleared the deck on which a single, bare worklight remained burning, I found myself alone in the sudden stillness, lying front and center of that vast, dark, empty stage, with my face against the splintered wooden floor, sobbing like a child."

I wonder what Artaud or Grotowski would make of this. Probably, I think, they would try to dismiss it as irrelevant and precisely the sort of theatre they have tried to abolish. A theatre historian, however, does not have the luxury of abolition. He or she must try to account for what existed. It remains difficult to see how a coherent account of twentieth-century theatre can be written when it must comprehend lives as different as those of Grotowski and Houseman. It is no wonder that Elsom and Bernstein reduce their books to the extremes of excerpting, summary, and simplification.

Houseman's description explains why people become producers, directors, actors, and playwrights. No other line of work provides precisely this kind of soul-wrenching contact with people who have, for two hours or more, attended exclusively to the words of your mouth and the meditations of your heart. I have come across no other passage in theatrical history which expresses so well as Houseman's the ecstasy and the anguish exacted by labor in the theatre.

The Feast of St. Michael and All Angels

"Angels are into holiness," said the priest, smiling.
"Let them lead you into praise."
I adjusted my cotta over my sleeves
And stared at the back of my left hand
When he said, "Every knee shall bow,
In heaven and on earth and under the earth—
Heaven being where the angels are
Earth where we are
And under-the-earth where the fallen angels are."

I thought, "Yes, we are on the earth, where a place is,
But is heaven a place-where?
Aren't these two wheres as different
As the difference I feel
Here on the earth listening to you
Talk about heaven in this day and age?
And what do you mean
That the fallen angels are under the earth?
Is the under-earth a place-where,
Except in Dante?
Are the fallen angels "into Dante" now
And his City of Dis-
Belief took me, thinking
"The first term is hard to credit,
But I can image it; the second is here-and-now;
Yet the third is simply not so,
Except in words."

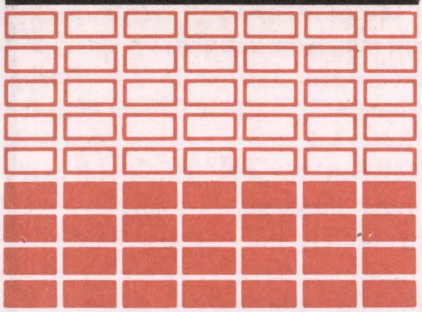
Were the others in their pews feeling what I felt
At that moment—that three kinds of belief
Were demanded by Paul's phrase,
But might call up from under the earth
Like Saul, three kinds of denial?

Later, when with outstretched arms like Jesus
He sang, "Therefore we praise you,
Joining our voices with Angels and Archangels
And with all the company of heaven,"
I wanted to lift my hands too but didn't
For fear of being out of place in the church.
Instead, I saw a fly light on his shining brow
And walk like Lucifer on his balding head,
Until with an unliturgical arm
He waved it into flight
Away from the Real Presence.

Oh, Holy Michael, who is like God?

Joe McClatchey

Campus Diary



More Rumblings from A Dormant Volcano

John Strietelmeier

Last month I was so bold as to suggest that curriculum-building may not be so much an essential part of the educational task as it is a kind of sanctified escape from the main business of education. Implicit in what I wrote was an intimation that *if* an institution were to assemble a faculty of highly competent and highly dedicated teachers and researchers, and *if* it were to allow them time to think and work, and *if* it were to pay them well enough that they had no reasonable need to supplement their salaries, and *if* it had a clear idea of what its degrees were intended to warrant in its graduates, and *if* it accepted as students only those applicants for admission who showed reasonable promise of becoming that kind of graduate—then it could get by comfortably with something like bare-bones curricula.

Now, of course, those are enormous *ifs*. But they do suggest that the main road to institutional greatness may not run through the curriculum. If the greatness of a college or university is largely the reflection of the quality (intellectual and moral) of its graduates, then it is clear (to me, at least) that the central task of the institution is that of bringing wise older scholars and promising younger scholars into face-to-face contact with each other in comfortable, leisurely situations which encourage the sharing of information, insights, speculations, drolleries, experiences, enthusiasms, crotchets, and convictions. This may or may not happen if the University Senate decrees that all freshmen must take General Studies 10, The Wisdom of the Ages. It will almost certainly happen if every freshman has the opportunity to spend some time talking to Mr. Einstein or Mr. Lewis or Mrs. Arendt or Coach Stagg.

For wisdom is what higher education should be all about. And there are, I think, only two sources of wisdom: 1) our own experience, especially our mistakes, and 2) the vicarious experience we derive from conversations with wise men and women, living and dead. Life is too short, and our callings too urgent, to allow us to spend any considerable amount of time with fools or dullards—certainly not because they happen to be teaching a course required by our curriculum.

Of course we must also—most of us—equip ourselves to make a living. So yes, students need to meet the specific expectations of the job market in their chosen trade or profession—at the entry level. And yes, a privately-supported college or university has every right to expect its students to examine seriously whatever it is that the institution itself takes so seriously that it generates its own funding to promote it. But beyond that, who really knows what specific preparation a 20-year-old man or woman needs to live victoriously in the world as it will be in 2022?

When I was 20 years old, it was widely believed that totalitarianism was "the wave of the future." There were no such things as computer programs or bytes or print-outs. A lot of good people were isolationists. Liberal theologians were sure that this would yet become the Christian century. Admiral Leahy assured President Roosevelt that rockets would never be anything more than toys. And the greatest professor I ever had delivered a brilliant lecture on why Japan would never attack the United States.

That could tempt one to the conclusion that an apprehensive young adult may have at least as good an idea of what he or she needs by way of preparation for the long and murky future as does any senior faculty member. At least the young adult may not be as concerned as is the faculty member for the interests of a particular disciplinary or departmental satrapy. So while I have no doubt myself that life in 2022 will be a sere and wasted thing for those of our present undergraduates who have not heard me lecture on the geography of visual blight, I stop short of insisting that it be made mandatory for the degree. Indeed I have heard of people who were neither bankrupt nor bed-ridden nor in jail at my age, despite their never having had a course in geography. Or even in social science. Or the liberal arts. Or, for that matter, college. So how can anyone be really sure that he or she knows just the right recipe for quantity batches of wisdom?

Of course there must be curricula of some sort, but the principle for organizing them should, I would suggest, be analogous to that for taking vitamins: you don't benefit a great deal from taking more than the minimum daily requirement unless you have a specific deficiency which is known to be correctible by vitamin therapy.

What it comes down to is that, if I had my druthers, there would be very few required courses and a luxuriant growth of elective courses, all of which would be open to any student who had paid his or her tuition. And the "control" would be two comprehensive examinations taken in the senior year—about which, more next month.